

# BETTIE *Queen of Hearts* PAGE

BY JIM SILKE













# CONTENTS

---

## **UH-OH!**

page 7

## **TRASH**

page 9

## **SUGAR CANDY**

page 17

## **UNWASHED**

page 31

## **NUDE**

page 49

## **DRAW ME**

page 57

## **JUNGLE GIRL**

page 73

## **BETTIE**

page 85

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

page 94

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## UH-OH!

*Modern art is what happens when painters stop looking at girls  
and persuade themselves that they have a better idea.*

—John Ciardi

**I**t started with a drawing.

Back in 1980, young Dave Stevens labored through the night with a sable brush and India ink until the image of a lush, smiling, black-haired girl appeared. He modeled her after Bettie Page, and he called her Betty. She was the object of the hero's madcap passion in a story filled with a mysterious rocket pack, look-alikes for Doc Savage and The Shadow, a bulldog, a Mauser pistol and all kinds of other childish nonsense. The story, *The Rocketeer*, eventually appeared in a comic book, a medium considered the ghetto of literature.

From that trivial beginning, interest in Bettie spread through the comic-book industry, then to the major media, and the fifties pinup model had her fifteen minutes

of fame in the nineties. Inevitably, public interest waned, but in the fields of comics, fashion and graphics, Bettie continues to be a phenomenon.

Being a forties boy, my training compels me to try to explain how and why this happened, by dissecting Bettie's life and the events surrounding it and reducing them to some grand abstract idea. My generation's ideal is to get the whole history of the world down on a hundred pages. That means, of course, leaving out all the dancing girls, beggars, fiddle players and cartoonists, as well as stomach pains, fistfights, love affairs and every good cup of coffee. In short, leaving out all the good stuff. This process has something to do with the need for control and a fear of chance, mystery, chaos. But abstracts don't work with Bettie,

at least not with the paper Bettie, which is the only one I know anything about.

Chance. Chaos. Nonsense. Cartoonists, clowns and leopard-skin bikinis. They're all essential to Bettie's story.

The central mystery is not only how her resurrection could start with a drawing, but why — thirty-eight years after Bettie retired — old-timers are still drawing her, and new Bettie artists appear each year?

"What's the big deal?" Frank Frazetta asked me. I started to explain how I'd been drawing her for over forty years and he interrupted, "*I know!* We all did! But what's the big deal now?"

That's what this book will attempt to explain.









# TRASH

*Come on in! The truth is here!  
Come and have a look at her!*

—*Les Enfants du Paradis*

**E**very photo of Bettie is a knockout.

Whether taken by a consummate professional or a rank amateur, whether on location in the Florida Keys or a "three-dollar" motel, whether she is posed with a ball and chain or a teddy bear, whether she is wearing polka dots or a splash of suntan oil, it doesn't matter. There is always something being said, some kind of hocus-pocus at work.

But in the fifties, when she appeared regularly on the newsstand, not a word was written about what Bettie might be up to. Back then, nobody took trash seriously.

That, of course, was normal: few generations take trash seriously. But since the

current one does, it is important — in order to sense the atmosphere in which Bettie worked — to understand that in the fifties, nobody considered the possibility of there being value in any part of popular culture. Nobody had yet figured out that Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler were two of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. They wrote for a pulp magazine, *Black Mask*, and "pulp" were *trash*. Nobody knew Elzie Segar, Harold Gray and Milton Caniff were among the best narrative storytellers in the world. They weren't considered writers or artists. Their work appeared in the Sunday funnies, and cartoons were *trash*. Not even the French avant-garde in 1951 considered the motion picture to be an art form, or directors such as Alfred

Hitchcock, Jack Ford, George Stevens, Walt Disney, Stan Lauvel, and Howard Hawks to be anything more than commercial hacks. Maybe the foreign cinema was art, but never an American movie. They were *trash*. And "girl" magazines, well, they were beneath consideration.

Back then, the cultural establishment decreed that the only works of creativity that could be considered art were those found in the New York theaters and galleries, in the socially conscious novels, and in the classic operas, ballets and symphonies. If it cost a lot, there was a good chance it was art. If it was cheap and available to everyone, it definitely was not.

Forces were at work that would eventually



open up minds to the possibilities inherent in the vulgar and illegitimate, but at the onset of the fifties, there was simply too much going on for anyone to notice. Looking back at that era, writers frequently refer to it as the "forbidden



Beauty Parade, Vol. 13 No. 5, November 1954

fifties," calling it one of the most culturally and sexually repressed times in American history, but that's a facile and false analysis. The fifties were wildly rebellious compared to the forties.

In 1947, the emotional trauma of sexual repression was something many teenagers still confused with religious ecstasy. Young people had no spending money, and their clothes were just adult clothes in smaller sizes. The only things that generation could call its own were dime comics, penny bubble gum and one lyric, "They Tried to Tell Us We're Too Young" — which was sung by an adult! If it had occurred to any of that generation to rebel, which it didn't, they wouldn't have had the time. They were, like the teen-agers of all generations, preoccupied. Primarily with the opposite sex. And in the forties, that took on unique dimensions.

When a comedian from that era jokes about spending his entire high-school life searching for some valid information about the "uterus," he is not speaking in hyperbole. That's how it was. Months, even years, were spent in the library, researching the wrong organ.

For the majority of adolescent males in that ancient time, sex was essentially an act of imagination, and what they sought was an image of a nude woman that would verify and validate their wildest dreams. But finding one was all but impossible.

American magazines, including the "slicks," "pulp" and "pinup" publications, did not print pictures of nude women, except for: *National Geographic*, which, in the name of anthropology or science, published photographs of bare-breasted native women in far-off lands; the *Spicy "pulp," Spicy Detective, Spicy Mystery, Spicy Adventure* and *Spicy Western*, which began publication in the mid-thirties displayed naked breasts in their interior illustrations, but the nipple, rendered with blunt pens by unskilled artists, was no more than the dot over an "i"; and the nudist magazine, *Sunshine & Health*, which had first appeared in 1937 and was still in distribution and featured women who didn't look a bit like the models who posed for the covers of *Planet Stories* and *The Phantom Lady*. They were old, and tainted with moles, body fat and other unappealing growths. It would be more than twenty years before the American public was ready for full frontal nudity.

The Motion Picture Production Code, established in 1930 and still in effect in the forties, banned on-screen nudity and forbade the use of publicity photos of actresses displaying cleavage. Airbrush artists removed the vulgar bulges. The major newspapers, obeying the same



Sunshine, February 1955, The Nudist Picture Magazine

sense of decency, diligently removed all offending bellybuttons from advertising photos featuring female models wearing the popular two-piece swimsuits.

Given all this, you can imagine what effect Bettie would have on a forties boy when he finally got a look at her.

The forties were repressive. But suddenly

they were over, and no one in the forties could have dreamed up something as awesome as the fifties.

Kids were everywhere. With money. Buying all kinds of stuff, particularly mer-



Wink, Vol. 9, No. 1, August 1953

chandise created strictly for them: Harley-Davidson motorcycles, orchid-pink dress shirts, Dubarry Treasure Stick lipstick, Merry Widow push-up bras. Hollywood even made movies for kids: *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. It seemed that every month, bursts of creative energy offered new products from new fields, fields without rules, habits and inhibitions: paperbacks, crime comics, 45-rpm singles. Now there

Buddy Holly, Jerry-Lee Lewis, Bill Haley and the *Comets* ~~had it all even their own music, rock-and-roll.~~

Just as suddenly, forties teen-agers became adults. The awkward years were over, and with maturity came recognition. Not only an era had ended, but a way of life. It seemed as though the fifties had invented teen-agers, and as a social class, it actually had. A social class which brought a whole new aspect to American culture.

Jimmie Dean was its high-speed prince of hard truth and Elvis Presley was king. And its queen, well, no one recognized her as such at the time, but she was there, all right, right from the beginning, and she'd made an entrance unlike any queen had made before.

In 1950, in the "sleazy" part of town, a few tawdry store dealers, who dealt in





In 1951, pinups of Bettie sold for 15¢ by direct mail from Irving Klaw's Movie Star News. Photo by Paula Klaw.



Under the counter, a set of five 4"x5" nude photos of Bettie could be purchased for \$1.50.

illegal, under-the-counter merchandise, sold sets of black-and-white photographs of nude models for around \$1.50. Hundreds of forgettable and forgotten girls appeared in those "naughty" pictures, and among them, poised on her 4"x5" glossy throne, was Bettie Page.

Her image was an instant narcotic. The slim, compact, comic-strip figure; the small, plump, firm breasts; the crow-black hair with the shoulder-length pageboy haircut; and the promise behind the eyes took male fantasies on a roller-coaster ride. Starting in 1951, she appeared, in scanty garments, in publisher Robert Harrison's "pinup" magazines: *Flirt*, *Eye-ful*, *Beauty Parade*, *Whisper* and others. Bettie also showed up in *Art Photography*, clothed only in shadows, to demonstrate photographic technique. Then, after its debut in July 1951, Bettie appeared on the pages of *Modern Man*, the first magazine to overtly offer semi-nudes of beautiful models simply for entertainment.

After *Playboy* appeared in 1953 and created a sensation, a flood of "girl books" followed, and Bettie appeared in most of them.

There were literally hundreds of titles, many lasting only a few months, others a

few years. The vast majority of the thousands of young women who appeared nude on their pages had modeling careers that lasted for only two or three photo sessions. Few, if any, had the style, sense of class and "look" required for the mainstream media and advertising accounts. The publishers of the men's magazines didn't care. Their only requirements were youth, a cheap kind of beauty and a new face. That was essential. Of all the models who posed for those publications in the fifties, including *Playboy*, only two sustained careers of substantial length: Diane Weber, the sensational West Coast nude model, and Bettie Page.

Her entrance onto the fifties scene is now well documented. Bettie Mae Page, after an abortive attempt to become a movie actress, arrived in New York in late 1948. She was twenty-six. From 1949 to sometime in late 1957, when she turned thirty-five, Bettie made her living as a photographer's model, working what was then the basement of the modeling profession.

Movie Star News, Irving Klaw's mail-order company, provided her main source of income, and she appeared in countless 4"x5" black-and-white, glossy photos, most of which were taken by Klaw's sister, Paula. Fifteen cents for pinups; twenty-five cents for high heels, silk stockings or

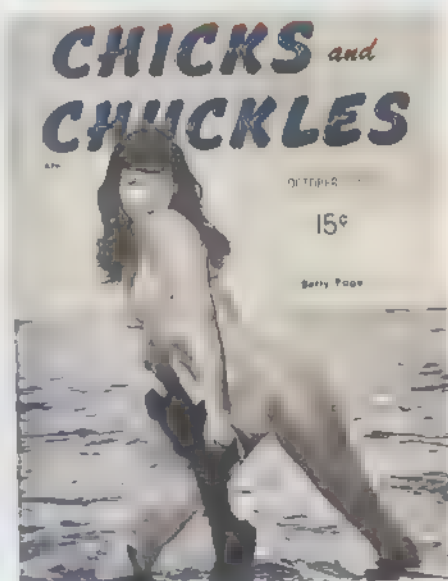
fight scenes; and forty cents for spanking and bondage photos. The Klaw's audience was an exclusive one, so Bettie's career in this field remained essentially unknown to the general public.

The Klaw's themselves never produced nude photos, not only out of fear of U.S. Postal regulations, but because they believed nudity produced a sense of reality that destroyed the necessary fantasy. But photographers who worked for the Klaw's did do nude work on the side with Bettie. From these sessions came the sets sold under the counter.

Bettie also danced and posed in 8mm short films marketed by the Klaw's. In 1953, she performed in *Strip-o-Rama*, a feature-length film that was exhibited in Burlesque houses, and in 1955 she was seventh billed in another striptease feature film, *Varitease*.

It's estimated that more than 20,000 photos of Bettie were taken. At an average wage of \$10 an hour, she probably made less than \$4,000 a year. And even though she posed for hundreds of professional photographers — including the star "girl photographers," Peter Basch, L'Avant, Weegee, Jan Caldwell and Philip Stearns — few of them captured her full potential. Fortunately, that changed in 1954





From top: *Peep Show* first appeared in the winter of 1951, *Chicks and Chuckles*, October 1955; *Eyeful*, Vol. 10, No. 1, August 1953. Opposite: Artists cheered when Bettie went to Florida and posed for Bunny Yeager





when Bettie took her act to Florida and went to work for Bunny Yeager.

Bunny had an eye. In her pictures, light, shadow, location and camera angle all came together to heighten Bettie's physical beauty. Bunny's keen perception of character caught the precise moments when Bettie's inner beauty magnified her exterior.

One day, "It seemed she would do just what I wanted. I would see early poses, with her face in profile, turned away, right along with the 'look devilish' poses. It was simple to change her mood. I would just throw adjectives at her. 'Look devilish! Queering! Seductive! Surprised! Breathless! Innocent! Vivacious! Wanton! Dooring! Teasing!' It was like we were creating together."

Despite Bunny's skill, her photos of Bettie never appeared in the class publications. Bunny was the star of the second year, and her Bettie pictures appeared on the covers of the digest-sized

news/gossip magazines such as *Bald*, *Impe*, *Vue* and *Carnal*, in the camera magazines, and in the "girl books" such as *Art Photography*, *Modern Man*, *Figure Quarterly* and *Playboy*.

It was undoubtedly Bunny's pictures that inspired a number of young artists' interest in Bettie. Posing against a simple background without any distortion of her figure by the camera, she was not only fun to draw, but instructive. One of the unique qualities about a Bettie photo is that it allows the artist to see clearly how the parts of her body merge and move together: how the deltoid joins the biceps, the rib cage flows into the stomach. And, since Bunny always caught Bettie in a graceful, artistic pose, the artist's drawings had the potential of being graceful and artistic. Consequently, more than a few would-be illustrators began to clip Bettie's pictures and hoard them away as research, in "scrap" files designed to hold any and every visual subject recorded on paper.

The file system in fashion at that time had

been designed by an eminent "slick" magazine illustrator, Al Parker, and was published in the Advanced Famous Artist's correspondence art school, started in 1949. Among Parker's categories was PEOPLE with a subcategory of Women/Figure/Nude. That's where most of Bettie's photos went, with a few ending up in Women/Pinup and in the COSPLAY file, under the sub-category of Twentieth Century/Female/Lingerie.

It was in 1954 or 1955 that I first drew Bettie. Some elusive quality in her photos made me loosen up, made me interpret rather than copy, so whenever my drawings became stiff, out came the Bettie pictures. In 1957, as an art director at Capitol Records in Hollywood charged with hiring models to appear on the covers of record albums, I considered employing Bettie for a George Shearing album. But the cost of flying her to the Coast was prohibitive.

Then, one day in December 1957, at the peak of her fame, Bettie walked away





From top: *Presenting Betty Page Outdoors*, 1961; *Presenting Betty Page*, No. 1, 1960; *Presenting Betty Page at Home*, No. 5, 1962  
Right: *Frolic*, Volume 5, No. 3, December 1956

from it all. And disappeared. Unnoticed. Pictures of Bettie continued to appear in scattered publications into the early sixties, and in books all her own: the digest-sized monographs *Bettie Page, America's Foremost Figure Model*, *Presenting Bettie Page Outdoors* and *Presenting Bettie Page at Home*. None of the photos were taken in her actual home, and the publications did not offer a single fact about Bettie's real life. Finally, sometime in 1963, she also vanished from the newsstands.

"Why had she quit? Where had she gone?" Only her professional friends bothered to ask. The nation's attention had been caught by another revolt ripping at its culture.

The great American striptease was under way. Each year, during the fifties, more and more girls had become willing to pose nude, and by the end of the decade, that even included some "respectable" women. In the early sixties, both foreign and domestic movie actresses joined this social revolution with on-screen love-making scenes described as "sweating under the sheets." By the seventies, the sheets were removed. At the same time, all of entertainment and advertising began in earnest to push and shove at the limits of respectability, and at the legal definition of pornography. In the men's field, frontal nudity came into vogue, then "splits," brilliantly lit by "pin spots" and pink gels. The mad, tasteless rush for more and more exposure finally culminated in 1990 when a woman's orgasm was photographed by a high-tech mini-camera placed inside her vagina, and broadcast on prime-time television during a "sweeps week."

Long before this occurred, in the mid-sixties, I had somewhat participated in this national striptease, photographing actresses in mildly revealing pictures for *Cinema and Movies International*, two film magazines I had created and edited. But as the actresses — and their performances on film — began to get harder and cruder, I, like many others, lost interest and stopped publishing in the early seventies. I sought *Glamour*, *Beauty*, *Personality*, and for me that meant looking backwards, into my "scrap" files.

It was only natural — not wanting to have to pick through the various files every time I wanted to draw a well-defined nude female body — that I decided to give

Bettie her own file. At that time, I still considered drawing pinups a less-than-respectable occupation, but at the same time had to admit that I preferred drawing the nude female form, particularly Bettie's, more than any other subject. I suspected there was something within Bettie's image that was working on me subconsciously and was somehow linked to the act of drawing but did not have the wisdom or wit to figure out what. Not then.

Meanwhile, Bettie remained forgotten by the general public. Then, in 1979, the phenomenon began to take shape.



In Ocean Beach, California, a sixteen-year-old boy was rummaging through Kruger's Book Shop when he found a copy of *Frolic*, a men's magazine published in the fifties. In it was one picture of Bettie Page, the photograph that has now become known as "The shot heard 'round the world."

"All it took was that one photo," Dave Stevens recalls. "My ears were ringing after that."

In the following years, Stevens amassed a collection of Bettie photos and ephemera. Then, in June 1982, on the third page of a five-page back-up story in volume one #3 of *Starslayer*, a comic book published by Pacific Comics, the drawing Dave had slaved over appeared, introducing "Cliff Secord's" girlfriend, "Betty." She was, of course, the image of Bettie Page, not only in physical appearance but in spirit.

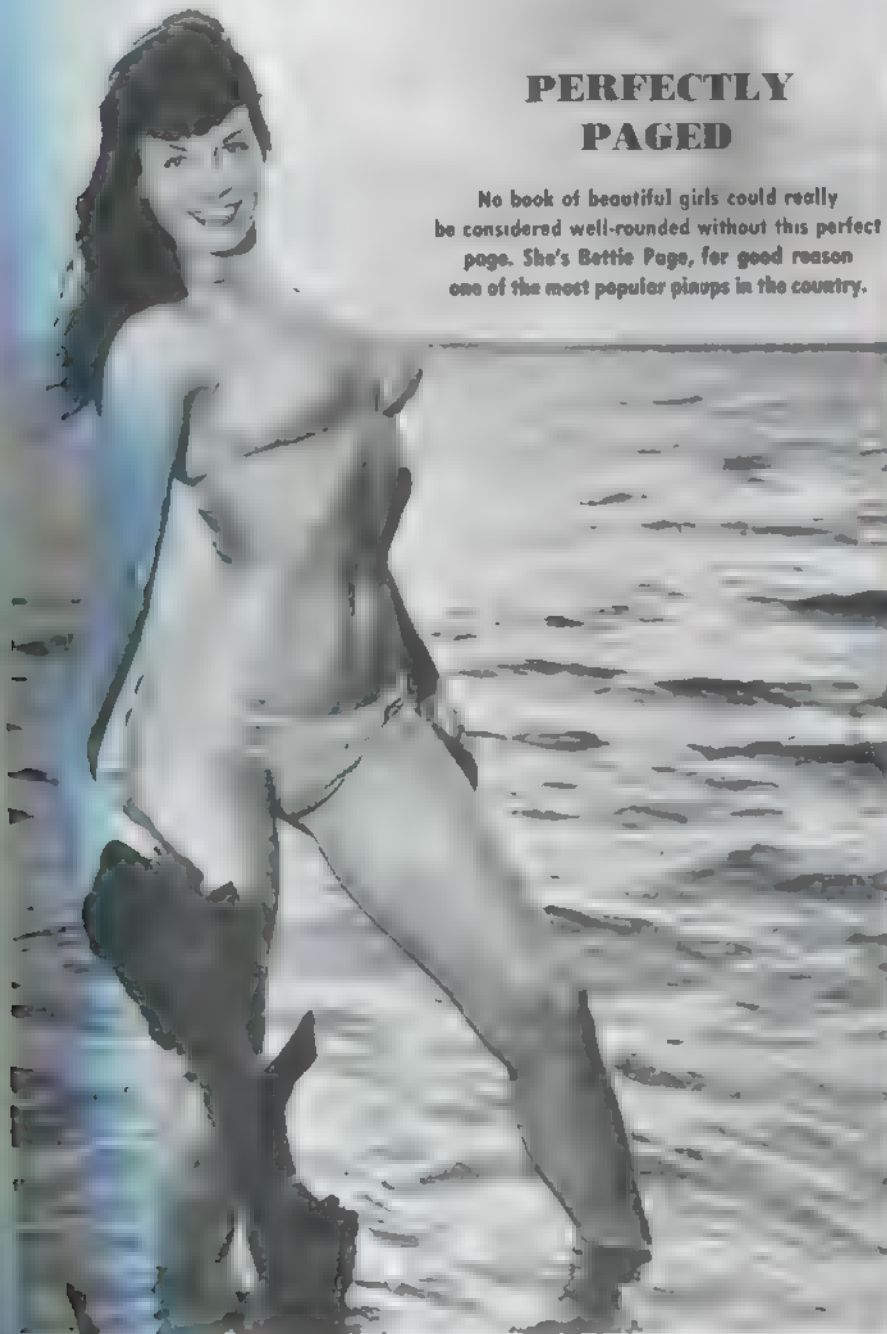
The rest is history.

Bettie's old 8mm "loops" began to be used for fashion tips by the Melrose

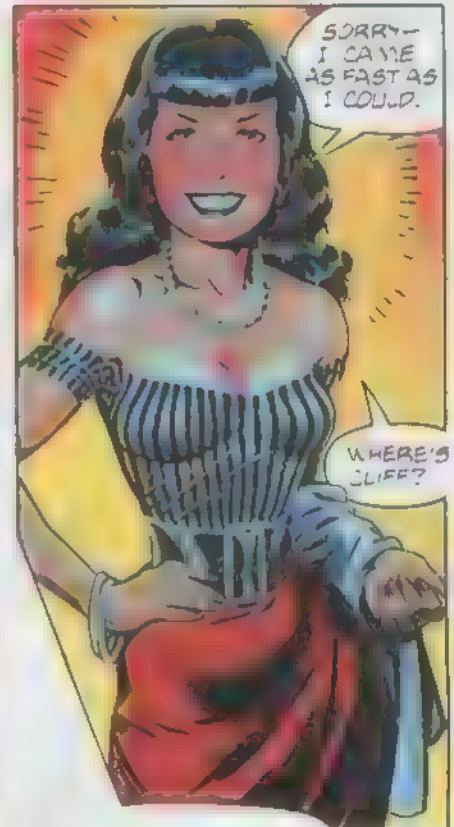


## PERFECTLY PAGED

No book of beautiful girls could really be considered well-rounded without this perfect page. She's Bettie Page, for good reason one of the most popular pinups in the country.



...the world" page 43 of *Frolic*, Vol. 5, No. 3, December 1956. In 1979 Dave Stevens found a copy in a used book shop.



Betty's first reappearance, as The Rocketeer's girlfriend in *Starslayer* Vol. 1 No. 3.

the telephone with the editor of *The Betty Pages*; and Dave Stevens was allowed to go see her.

From this, a few basic facts emerged. She was somewhere in Southern California, living in a retirement home. She had a brother, and a lawyer, in Chicago. She'd quit modeling and left New York because she thought there were too many photos of her in the marketplace. She'd gone back to Tennessee and gotten married, a couple of times. She was divorced and had given her life to the Lord. But she had never had any regrets about modeling and was determined to keep her private life private.

The mystery of the real Bettie's disappearance was solved! But the mystery surrounding the paper girl, of what she was up to and how her magic works, is still at play.

For a department designers. *The Betty Pages*, a coast-sized magazine devoted almost entirely to old photos of Bettie, appeared in 1937. Then *Rolling Stone* did a feature on her, followed by *U.S.A.*, *Life*, and *U. Weekly*, while in Europe *Look*, *Figures* and *Glamour* featured her. Published "coffee-table" magazines devoted entirely to Bettie. There were 3-D magazines, trading cards, a lot of art prints and figurines, and various feature-film strips with a pinup orientation. The trash of the good old fifties became an integral part of the sixties. And the mystery took on a life of its own.

Why had she disappeared? Where had she gone? Who was she really? In reply, vague rumors spread: she'd gone back to Tennessee; she'd given her life to Christ; she'd renounced her past as a nude model; she was living in England — with a duke.

None of the thousands of words written about Bettie, no matter how they tried, revealed anything significant or even mildly dramatic. Then suddenly, in 1993, she surfaced. Her voice, complete with Tennessee twang, was heard on the television show, "Lifestyles of The Rich and Famous"; she did a lengthy interview on









# SUGAR CANDY

*Like all men you are fascinated by the mystery of a woman —  
then you must analyze until the glamor is gone!*

—The Dragon Lady from "Terry and the Pirates"

**T**he obvious techniques of Bettie's artistry, the art of displaying herself with a care or guilt in extraordinarily revealing poses, were employed by a wide range of girls who appeared long before Bettie. Like Bettie, these beauties were also treasured in the early eighties, but not as eagerly sought after by collectors. As a rule, more often than not, the same collectors collected Bettie photos. But unlike Bettie, these pinup girls are completely forgotten by historians.

Like the ideal pinups — impossibly beautiful creatures with perfect smiles and flawless bodies — created by artists,

these girls were the most famous, these girls were the most coveted, from calendars and postcards to the glossy, high-end magazines found in the offices of

Wall Street lawyers. Perfecting the wiggle, squirm and wink into a kind of ribald art form, and employing both vulgar and subtle shades of light and color, the artists used the printed page as a paper stage on which their fictional girls could joyously celebrate themselves in what has become known as the pure, sugar-candy school of glamour art.

It is in this pinup tradition, not the photographic, that Bettie's craft is rooted.

In Western culture, that tradition started in Paris, France on January 4, 1863 when Emile-Marcelin-Isidore Planet published the first issue of the magazine *La Vie Parisienne*. In it appeared such talents as Baudelaire, Dore and Forain, working, of course, under pseudonyms. Then, in the 1870s, in an attempt to portray how stylish women slept, ate, dressed and undressed,

the *La Vie Parisienne* paper girl appeared. By the next century, famous deco artists such as Brunelleschi, Leonnec, Barbier, Herouard, Bonnotte and Peppin were adding their versions of pulchritude to the magazine's pages.

Since many of these artists also designed the clothes that made Paris the center of high fashion, they presented their paper beauties in the most current *haute couture* modes of *deshabille*. The magazine was high quality, designed for the upper, moneyed class, and the girls were the epitome of the stylish, spirited, witty French *cocotte* to whom flirtation was an art. Staged in situations where they were unaware of being observed, the girls rarely confronted the reader. The distinguishing feature of the French paper girl, however, is that she was as much a comedienne as a glamour girl. The drawings, while







extraordinary in design and draftsmanship, were rendered in a cartoon style, and comic captions accompanied them. The spirit of *La Parisienne* was borrowed from the pantomime theater, the music halls and the reviews staged at *La Moulin Rouge* and the *Folies Bergere*. The artists also designed costumes and sets for these theatrical revels, and in many of their drawings their girls wear the masks and molley of clowns.

The best of the French artists was Raphael Kirchner. His girls usually adorned the covers of *La Vie Parisienne*, and it is Kirchner who, in 1916, painted the beauties decorating the old Ziegfeld Theater in New York. With the outbreak of World War I and the arrival in Europe of English and American troops, the Kirchner beauties became the first internationally famous paper girls. Rendered in graphite pencil and delicate watercolor, Kirchner's girls were petite, with pump bellies, small hands and feet and soft filmy hair. They were the inspiration for Alberto Vargas and other artists.

Many claim that the first calendar nude also made her debut in France, in 1912 with Paul Chabas' painting, *Mutinee de Septembre* (September Morn). After Chabas' painting appeared in the United States in 1913, a tradition was established, and painted calendar girls appeared regularly right up to the end of the sixties.

The male public loved them, but the only people who gave them any critical attention were artists in the same or a similar trade. That included newspaper comic-strip artists, particularly those who drew the adventure strips. To please daddy as well as the kiddies, these cartoonists populated their strips with tantalizing females. In the thirties, a newspaper comic-strip panel contained nearly twenty-nine square inches of drawing area as opposed to today's eleven square inches. That gave ample room for a realistic artist like Milton Caniff, in "Terry and the Pirates," to draw his dangerous ladies, Burma and the Dragon Lady. Other provocatively and well-drawn female lead characters were Al Capp's Daisy Mae, Moonbeam McSwine and Wolf Girl in "Li'l Abner". Noel Sickles' Mirkey LaFarge in "Scorchy Smith"; and Raymond Van Buren's Becky Groggins in "Abbie and Slats." During that same period, the best-drawn women in comics appeared in color in the Sunday funnies: Alex Raymond's Dale Arden and Princess Aura in "Flash Gordon," and Hal Foster's Princess Nikotris in "Tarzan" and Aleta in "Prince Valiant."

Caniff, admittedly, had trouble drawing women and borrowed from illustrators Russell Patterson and George Petty. Roy

Right: Dale Arden from Alex Raymond's "Flash Gordon," © 1967 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Below: The Dragon Lady from Milton Caniff's "Terry and the Pirates." Inset: Daisy Mae from Al Capp's "Li'l Abner," © 1994 Capp Enterprises, Inc. Opposite: Calendar art by Gil Elvgren, © 1994 Brown & Bigelow, Inc.



# **FILM FUN**

May 1954



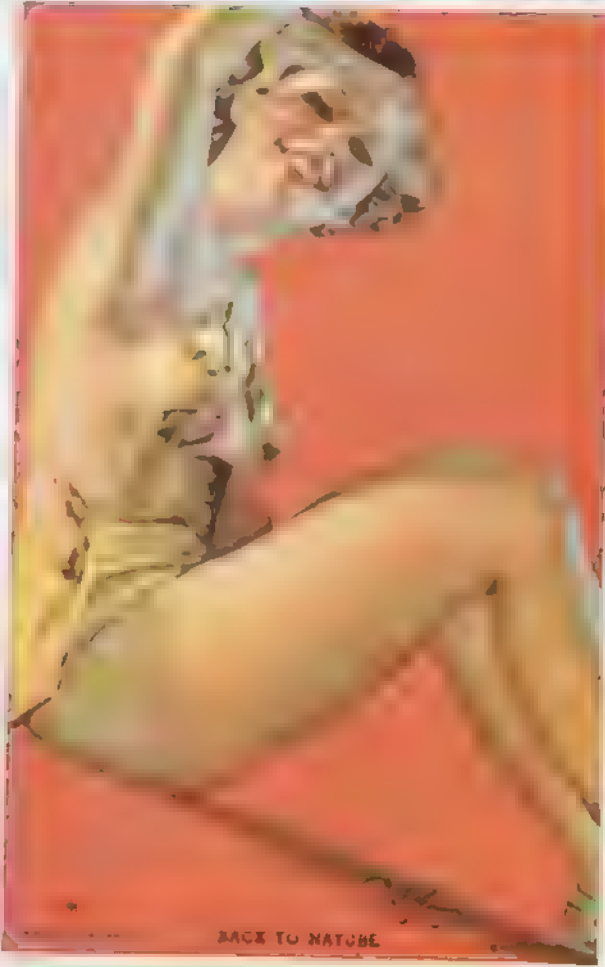
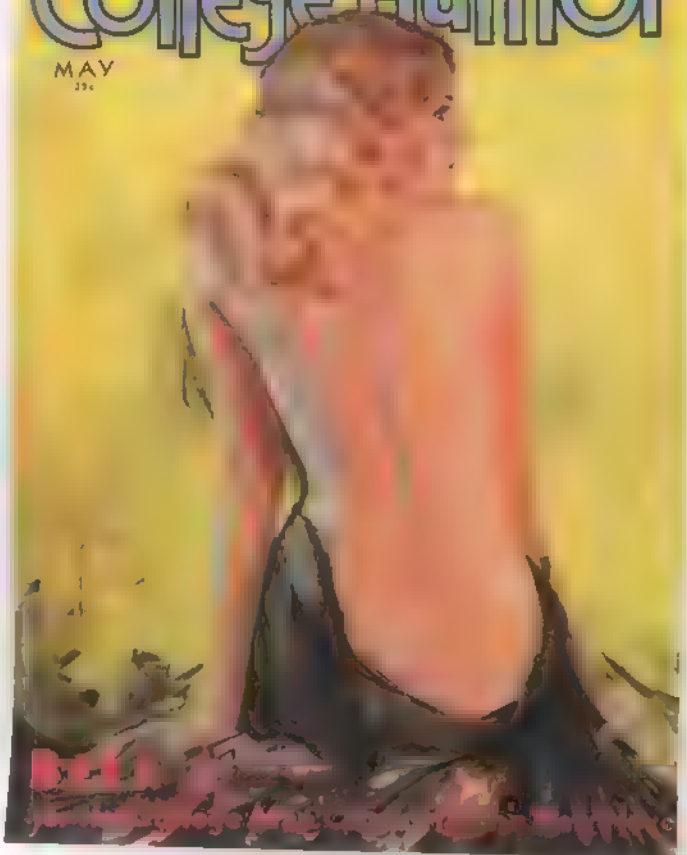
DESIGNED TO PLEASE!



SMART HUMOR BRIGHT COLORS SUBTLE SATIRE

# **College Humor**

MAY 1954



BACK TO NATURE

Clockwise from top left: Cover by Enoch Bolles; calendar art by Zoe Mozart; calendar art by Earl Moran; cover by Ralf Armstrong.



For the writer/cartoonist of "Wash Times," "Caddis Easy" and "Buz Sawyer" also had difficulty depicting beautiful women. To aid himself in his craft, he put together a sketchbook. One section, titled "The Drawing Pretty Girls," he filled with sketches like those displayed on these pages. Alongside them he noted the requirements for drawing a pretty girl:

*Curves, Curves, Curves. Lively and interesting. Always doing things with their feet and hands. The SEA POTS [a reference to the pinups] all were tall, thin-waisted, luscious and nothing but CURVES. No bones, no joints except at their fingertips. None were realistic. They were idealized. All did things. Always doing things with their feet and hands. To draw the female figure . . . think simply and in terms of curves. It means looking for the graceful, flowing line . . . the lively pose . . . graceful curves. And never mind what a girl really looks like.*

The rules were clear, and in the first half of the century there were more than a few artists who followed them with such skill and passion that their work has become avidly sought by collectors.

Rolf Armstrong, Brown & Bigelow's "star" girl artist, painted calendars — huge pastels, seven and eight feet high — from the twenties to the fifties. He also painted covers of female movie stars for *Photoplay* and *Screenland*, and covers featuring imaginary beauties for *College Humor*, which many artists consider to be his best work. The other top Brown & Bigelow calendar artists were Zoe Mozert, Earl Moran and Gil Elvgren. In the last few years, interest in Elvgren has soared. An original Elvgren oil painting, which sold for \$1,500 in 1984, now sells for \$20,000 or more.

Another highly sought artist is Emuec Bolles. From the twenties to the forties, Bolles painted deco-style pinups for the covers of the movie humor magazine, *Film Fun*, and for "pulp" such as *Bedtime Stories* and *Snappy*.

These artists developed a distinct American style pinup, featuring healthy, joyous, girl-next-door beauties who unabashedly, directly confronted their viewers. They are sexy, but in an innocent, playful, unthreatening way, the prototypes of sugar candy perfection. But another group of pinups were even more perfect.

In the twenties and early thirties, Henry Clive, Earl Christy, Modest Stein and Marland Stone, among others, painted covers for movie magazines: *Silver Screen*, *Modern Screen*, *Picture Play*, *Movie Classic*, *Screen Play* and many others. Their



Photos by Bunny Yeager



subjects, with rare exceptions, were the female stars and starlets then appearing on the silver screen. These artists worked primarily from black-and-white photographs provided by the publicity departments of the film studios. The photographers were among the world's most skilled portrayers of glamour: Clarence Sinclair Bull at MGM, Elmer Fryer and Scotty Welbourne at Warner Brothers, Ernest A. Bachrach at RKO, Eugene Robert Richee at Paramount and "Whitey" Schafer at Columbia; and the women set the standard of beauty for the world. Stars such as: Greta Garbo, Dolores Del Rio, Marlene Dietrich and Jean Harlow. The job of the artist was to make these already perfect beauties even more perfect, by smoothing out the skin, softening any hard edge and applying lush color. The preferred medium was pastel — the flesh tones could be smoothed to an impossible perfection, and short, frequent deadlines could be met because pastel, unlike oil paint, requires no drying time. Since this was before the days of Technicolor, these magazine covers provided the fans their only chance to see their favorite stars in color. In many cases, the artist's efforts blunted the distinct personality of the star, but in the hands of the best, it was heightened.

Unfortunately for the field of glamour art, in the

mid-thirties, when it became technically and financially feasible, the magazines all switched to using color photographs of the stars.

#### The *Esquire* Paper Girls

The two artists who epitomize the sugarcandy style both worked for *Esquire* magazine — George Petty and Alberto Vargas.

In the early thirties, when *Esquire* first appeared to immediate popularity, Petty drew full-page cartoons featuring sophisticated women and cartoonish older gentlemen. As the years progressed, the cartoons evolved into single figures of glamorous women holding telephone. They became so popular, the editors decided to enlarge the stage for the "Petty Girls," and in 1939, they began to drape themselves across two-page gatefolds. When Vargas came on the *Esquire* scene, in the October 1940 issue, he continued the gatefold tradition, his last appearance being in the December 1947 issue.

Petty also created a series of pinup advertisements for Old Gold Cigarettes, for Bestform brassieres, Jantzen swimsuits and Airman shirts, as well as a series of gatefolds for *True* magazine in the late forties. Vargas painted Ziegfeld beauties for *Shadoul* magazine in the twenties, portraits of stars

for the motion-picture studios in the thirties, and pinups for *Playboy* magazine in the fifties and sixties.

Today, a Vargas original from the *Esquire* era will go for as much as a million dollars, and art prints made from those originals — which are issued at \$2,000 to \$3,000 — quickly double and triple their value. To date, four books on Vargas have been published, and a new one is in the works as his fame continues to grow. An original Petty sells for a mere \$20,000, and the first book on his work is still seeking a publisher. But most artists prefer Petty's work with its unique style, combining exceptional draftsmanship, design and color. Petty created some of the most joyous, vital and attractive girls ever to sprawl on a printed page. His bride in white satin and Indian girl in full headdress, which he painted for the Old Gold advertisements, are two of the finest pinups ever created.

#### Pretty Girls and Narrative Art

All of the above-mentioned artists went against the artistic fashion of their time: modernism. Their work was representational, and the modernist establishment, for an ever-growing list of reasons, found it still finds, that reprehensible. But the mo-



ernists have a mindset that blinds them to the fact that the pinup and calendar artists, by having the wit and independence to work outside the cultural establishment and the humility to appeal to an ordinary — sometimes even lowbrow — audience, found a way to add a vital and expanding dimension to the tradition of classic narrative art.

The stylized manner in which they portrayed their girls, with vivid color, bright light, exotic costumes, open and joyous sensuality, and a physical perfection that was almost masklike, put them in an ancient theatrical tradition. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

### The Bettie Style

As the pictures on these pages demonstrate, Bettie photographically fulfilled the sugarcandy pinup tradition. She only had a fraction of the control over her image as the painters did, but nevertheless appears as lively, sweet, elusive, wild and "on fire" as any of the artists' creations. In the French style, she occasionally appeared aloof and detached, head averted from the camera as if she had no idea she was being observed, but her natural style was strictly American: a direct, frontal, come-and-get-me, take-no-prisoners attack, with every curve, dimple, finger, foot, hip and eyebrow in action.

Even though her image is stopped cold by the still camera, she appears to be in motion. The line of the body, the grouping of the fingers, the turn of ankle and wrist are all artfully at play to create this illusion. No photographer, not even the best of them, had to tell her how to pose. She was on her own, and she knew her subject.

By the polite standards of her time, she was common, cheap. But that is now irrelevant. What counts is that Bettie Page was proud and generous with her body and beauty, and in front of a camera, absolutely honest.

That's the unique ingredient in a Bettie photo. Whatever is happening inside, whatever her attitude, it is clearly, dramatically and honestly displayed in the expression of her body and face.

This put Bettie in the company of another group of artists.

### The "Slick" Paper Girls

During the first half of the twentieth century, rough-textured, slightly brown pulp paper was used for the cheap "mags" catering to small groups of lowbrow readers. The mainstream American magazines were printed on slick, white paper. The "slicks" sold to the established, fashionable, successful adult

members of the American "good life." The biggest seller, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, were edited to appeal to both male and female. But the greater number of "slick" magazines catered to women: *The Ladies Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *McCall's*, *The Woman's Home Companion* and *Redbook* led the field. It was in these magazines, not those published for men, that a group of superb girl artists worked.

Right: Print by Raphael Kirchner for *La Vie Parisienne*, 1915  
Below: *Esquire* calendar girl, September 1941 by Alberto Vargas. © 1994 by Esquire Associates  
Opposite: The most memorable of all the *Esquire* magazine gatefolds by George Petty, © 1994 by Esquire Associates







For the forties, the illustrators dominating the pages of all of these magazines came from one place: The Charles F. Cooper Studio. In many instances, entire issues featured only Cooper artists who all worked in a near-identical style. At the time, that style was derisively called the "big-head school of illustration," a name derived from the fact that every picture was dominated by a huge



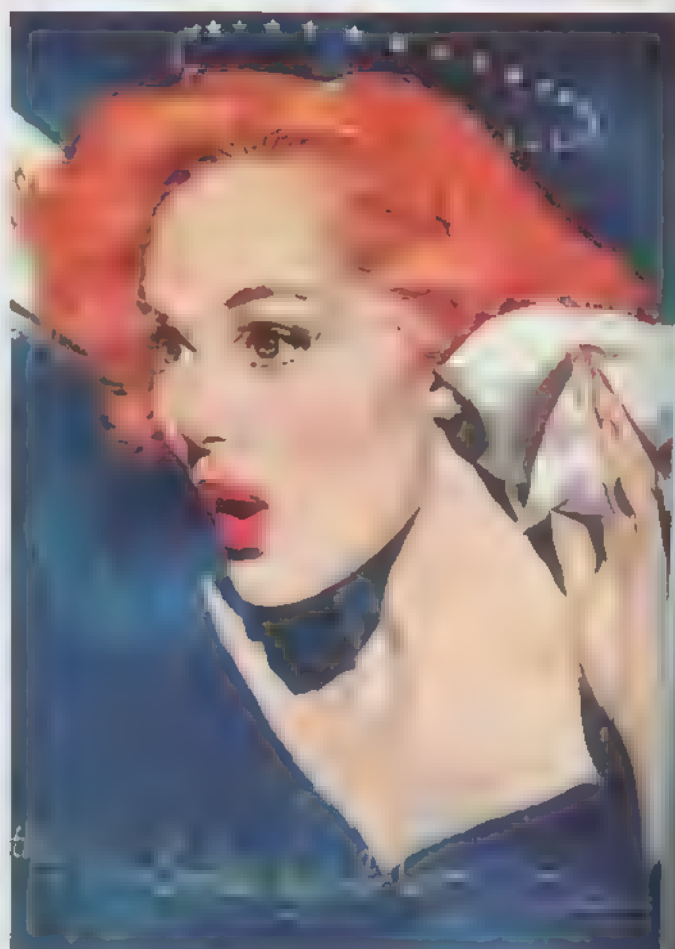
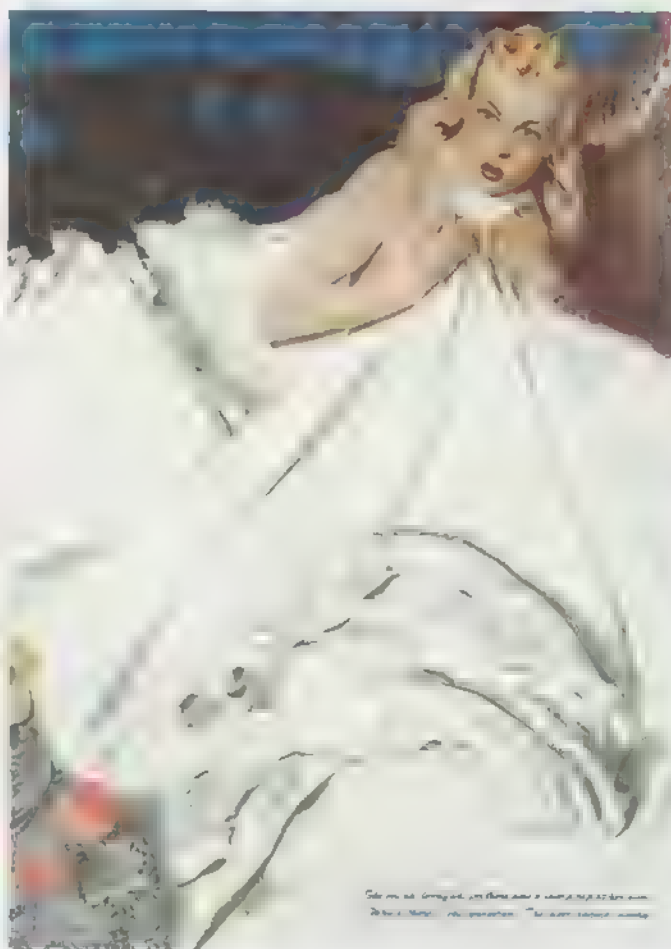
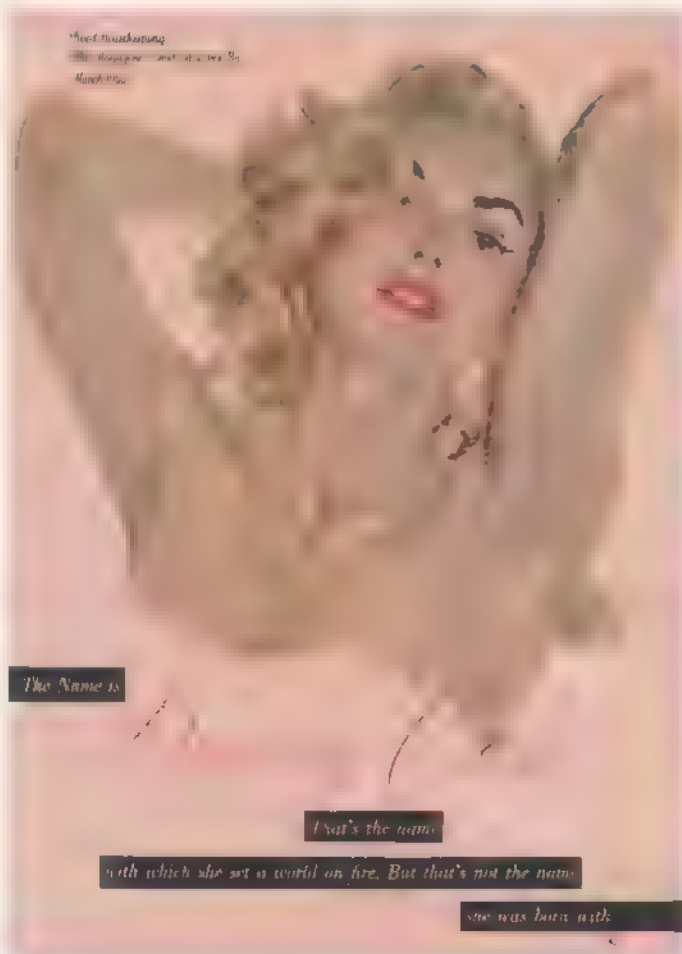
close-up of a beautiful woman, a style pioneered in the forties by the co-owner of the Cooper Studio, artist Jon Whitcomb.

The Cooper Studio roster included Joe Bowler, Joe DeMers, Robert Jones, Bernard D'Andrea, James Dwyer, Robert Levering, Ben Wohlberg and the studio "star" and unquestionably the best painter, Coby Whitmore.

Two of the most effective illustrators in the women's magazine field, however, were not



Above: Top: Dolores Del Rio painted by Henry Clive. Below: Anna Sten painted by Mariand Stone. Right and opposite: Photos by Bunny Yeager.



Clockwise from top left: Coby Whitmore illustration for *Cosmopolitan*; Edwin Georg illustration for *Cosmopolitan*; Jon Whitecomb illustration for *The Ladies Home Journal*; A. Parker illustration for *The Ladies Home Journal*

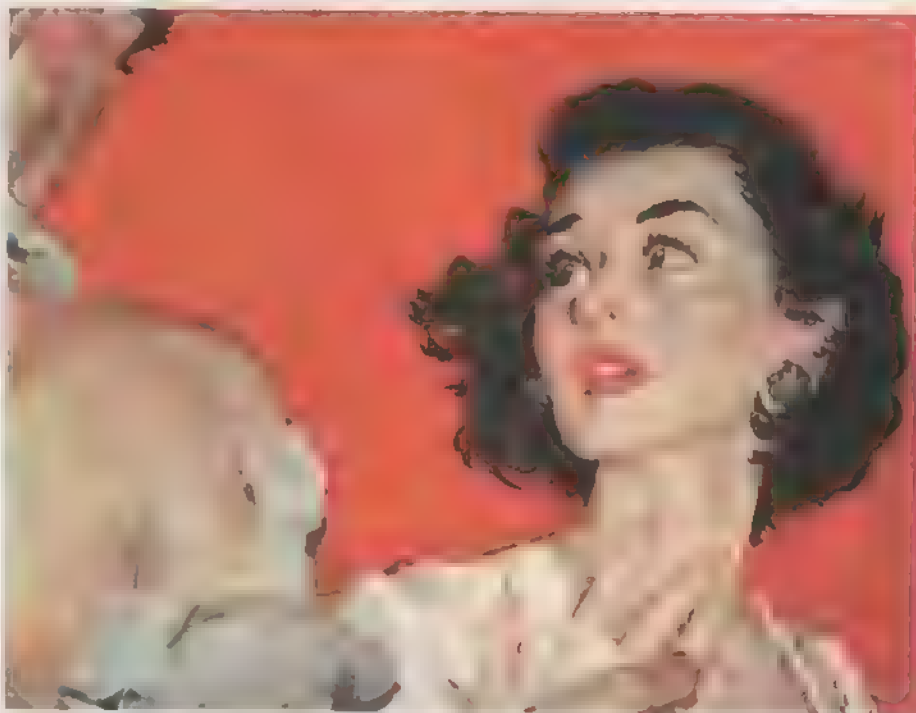


to the Cooper Studio: Al Parker, whose strengths were styling and page design, and Fred Goetz, an excellent draftsman and colorist who specialized in depicting the new women.

All these women's illustrators, like nearly every illustrator of that period, worked in the tradition of narrative art. Articulate draftsmen and highly skilled painters, working primarily in opaque water color, they were also experts in the then-current styles of color, clothes, decor, hair and make-up. The women they created were, in their own way, as ideal as the calendar girls, but with a difference: Being picture-makers hired to tell a story, the "big-head school" illustrators emphasized personality and character in order to enhance the dramatic moments and situations. The large format of most of the women's magazines, 10 1/2"x14", and the quality of the paper, gave the artists more than ample opportunity to delineate the inner life, the personality, and emotional attitude, as well as the exterior of their paper girls.

In the fifties, these painters of the American "good life" would have, of course, found a Bettie Page type of character unfashionable, too cheap and too "real" to appear in their illustrations. Nevertheless, her link with them is basic. Just as personality and character are essential ingredients of the Bettie Page phenomenon, they are also essential ingredients of narrative art — a fact of which the publishers of the "slick" women's magazines had forgotten but would soon be reminded.

Many illustrators held the same aesthetic beliefs as the modernists and were somewhat embarrassed by their profession. They yearned to change it, and by the end of the fifties, highly respected and talented illustrators such as Austin Briggs, Bernard Fuchs and Bob Peak were leading, as Briggs puts it, "... a healthy revolt against the slick, photograph-oriented illustration then in vogue ...". In short, against the Cooper Studio vogue. Borrowing from the most current modernist fads, these illustrators began to fill the pages of the women's magazines with illustrations which — while still in the "big-head school" — emphasized color, line, shape, light, texture and shocking design over character, personality, story and drama. Their *raison d'être* was that they had to compete with television. But their readers, being people, remained interested in people, and by the mid-sixties the major "slick" magazines were out of business or in serious decline, as was the entire field of illustration.



Right: Above, Joe DeMers illustration for *The Ladies Home Journal*  
Below, Coby Whitmore illustration for *The Ladies Home Journal*





### The Paper Bettie

By instinct or intent, Bettie learned her craft from the imaginary girls created by the pulp and calendar artists. She expressed the same joy, the same artless artfulness and had as striking a physical presence. Like the beauties in the "big-head school of illustration" painted by the "slick" magazine artists, she also had personality. Attitude. Character. But unlike all the painted girls, her act had another essential ingredient.

Something that had nothing to do with sugar-candy perfection.

Right: One-page cartoon by George Petty for the December 1938 issue of *Esquire*, © 1994 by Esquire Associates. Opposite: Calendar art by Rolf Armstrong, © 1995 Brown & Bigelow.









## UNWASHED

*Born good with a desire to be bad!  
She's a doll! She's a dish! She's a delinquent!*

—Advertisement for *Teenage Bad Girl*

In 1953, Brigitte Bardot, Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren competed with Bettie Page on every newsstand in America. Photographs of Bettie and those fabled European movie stars appeared weekly on the covers of *Bare*, *Peep Show*, *Bold*, *Vue* and *Tab*, and on the pages of *Modern Man*, *Frolic* and *Figure Quarterly*, sometimes on the same page. But the link between these women went deeper than the fact they shared the same media. Bettie and the European stars didn't play by the rules then governing the behavior of American glamour girls; they turned the game of love upside down.

Bettie, Brigitte, Gina and Sophia were hunters as well as the hunted. Honest and

open about their sexual appetites, they played good girls who might go bad, bad girls who might go good. In the process, they revolutionized theatrical convention.

They weren't starlets; they were startling animals. A shocking contrast to the beauties manufactured by Hollywood.

In the fifties, Hollywood's major studios not only continued to produce their standard whipped-cream variety of American glamour but added to it by designing films as colorful as a candy store. New color film processes were explored; new wide-screen systems enlarged the images of the stars and sets, and light was flooded onto the sound stages in order to hold focus on every polished prop, costume

and backdrop. In addition, stories of epic splendor became the vogue: *Quo Vadis*, *The Robe*, *Solomon and Sheba*, *Ben Hur*, *War and Peace*. The moguls argued that all this was necessary to compete with the new enemy — television. But television wasn't the real problem.

The powers in Hollywood did not understand that success in the fifties meant radical cultural and aesthetic change. These powers clung to the old style of storytelling that had produced the classic films of the thirties and forties, but they no longer had the passion, perception or talent to make that style work. A few of the most gifted directors and producers defied them and went their own way, but everyone else followed obediently.





Even apartments still had an eye for the camera — Kim Novak, Janet Leigh, Deborah Paget, Dawn Adams, Elizabeth Taylor, Julie Robbins, Roberta Hayes, Tina Turner — but before a star was photographed by the publicity department, her body hair was shaved, her eyebrows were plucked, her face was made up to get the typical housewife look. A year was applied and she was sprayed, bleached, plucked and polished. Costumers then dressed her in cotton, silk and pearls — or dressed her in bubble beads, satin, and pearls — and delivered her to the studio gallery. There, soft-focus lenses, 8 x 10" still cameras and floodlights requiring enough wattage to light the Western Hemisphere did the rest.

Looking back, some of the publicity stunts were fabulous in their own way, but the "old guard" that produced them couldn't have the vision to see that tomorrow required a different, less perfect style of glamour.

In Hollywood, for instance, had not rejected Bettie Page because of her Southern accent, it would have because of her lazy right eye, too thin upper lip and too defined rib cage, as well as those tacky high heels, tall enough to support bar stools. At the start of the fifties, tinsel town had no idea the public was hungry for something more realistic, more down-to-earth, even tawdry.

But the Europeans knew.

Since World War II had destroyed all their film studios, the Italians were making movies in the bomb-blasted streets of their cities and villages, without artificial light and synchronized sound, and with sweat-stained wardrobes borrowed from their own closets. The result was a school of film defined as Social Realism. Some of the best films of the century were produced at that time, and in the process, the producers quickly discovered that realism sold better — particularly in America — if unwashed beauties like Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren wore the rags and did the sweating.

Gina, whose first hit in America was *Wife*



Clockwise from top left: Brigitte Bardot in a candid shot taken in 1956. She was 22; Paula Kraw photo of Bethe in the early fifties. She was 27 or 28; Sophia Loren in *Amore the Hun*, 1953. She was 19; Gina Lollobrigida in a Philippe Halsman photo for the September 3, 1951 issue of *Life Magazine*. She was 23. Opposite: Photo by Burrey Yeager





*For a Night* in 1951, promptly made the cover of *Life Magazine*, becoming the post-World War II international star. She was twenty-three. Sophia debuted in *Atulla* in 1953. She was nineteen.

The French added their Gallic touch to the naturalist school with the "sex kitten," Brigitte Bardot. She made her first appearance in 1952 at eighteen. Her big film, *And God Created Woman*, didn't arrive until 1956, but her photos flooded the pinup magazines early in 1953 and the major media shortly after.

Lollobrigida may have been five years younger than Bettie, and Loren and Bardot eleven years younger, but Bettie fit the times as perfectly as the Europeans.

Bettie's sets had as much social realism as any war-torn Italian village. Her clothing certainly came from somebody else's closet, and she, like Bardot, removed her clothes at the least possible provocation.

The big difference between Bettie and the European stars, of course, was that Lollobrigida, Bardot and Loren were famous, rich and respected while Bettie was poor, cheap, and ignored. But Bettie had something going for her that the Europeans would never comprehend: an attraction and verisimilitude made possible by the American male's naiveté.

In the early fifties, American girls were defined in two ways, those who "didn't" and those who "did." Convinced that the "did" category was smaller than it had any right to be, the male population's imagination expanded it to include all car-hops and telephone operators, every girl who posed for beer and cigarette ads and, of course, Bettie.

Her media classified her. The pinup magazines — printed on paper that turned brown before the next issue came out — catered directly to the wink-and-titter crowd, and to make that absolutely clear, the publishers spelled it out in the titles, *Wink and Titter*. The cheap, amateurish, sloppily produced 4"x 5" glossies didn't even pretend to be respectable. Any American girl who posed nude was not amoral like Bardot, she was immoral.



Right: Above, Kim Novak at 23 in *Jeanne Eagles*, 1957. Below, Sophia Loren at 20 in *Women of the River*, 1954. Opposite: Wrestling photos taken by unknown amateur.



Left: Photo by Bunny Yeager.  
 From top: Painting of Cleopatra in headdress that inspired the "feminine" hair style; Claude Rains in *Cleopatra*, 1932; Anna May Wong, who made the "honey" famous playing villainess; Milton Caniff's sexy Miss Alice who became a favorite pin-up of the servicemen during World War II and is probably the inspiration for Betty's bangs.

... accepted the role and, unlike so many others, gave it all she had. In her first magazine photos for *Movie Star News*, she overacted in cartoonish displays of error, and in her flirty pinup poses there's a naughty twinkle to her eyes as she appreciated something about strip artists, screenwriters, playwrights, but novelists had discovered her earlier. Bad girls get to do all the interesting things: slink around in lacy lingerie, bathe in bubbles, dance wickedly in a handful of jewels, and flirt with their awestruck audience. In short, being bad was good, and by instinct or intellect, Bettie knew this.

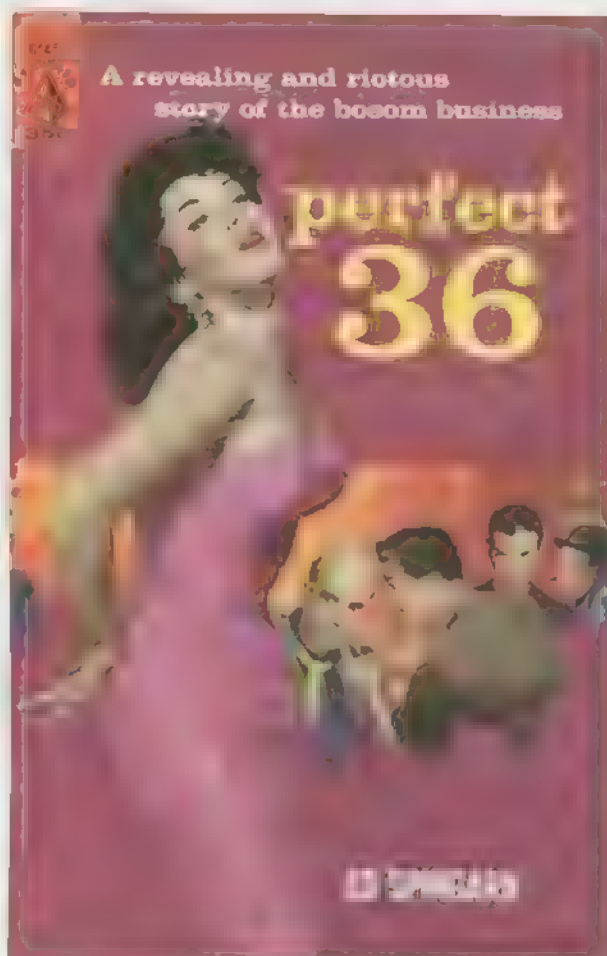
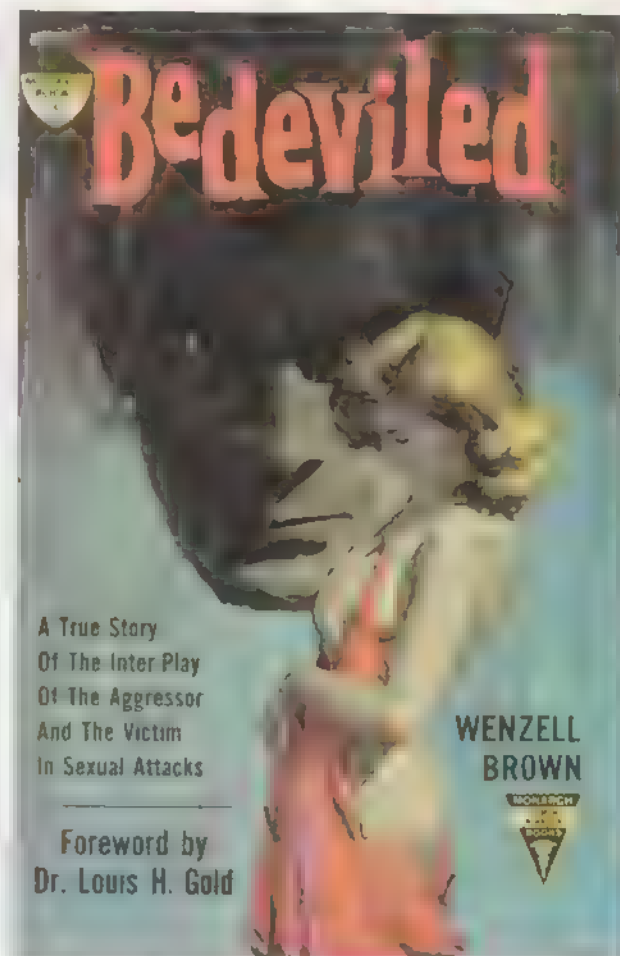
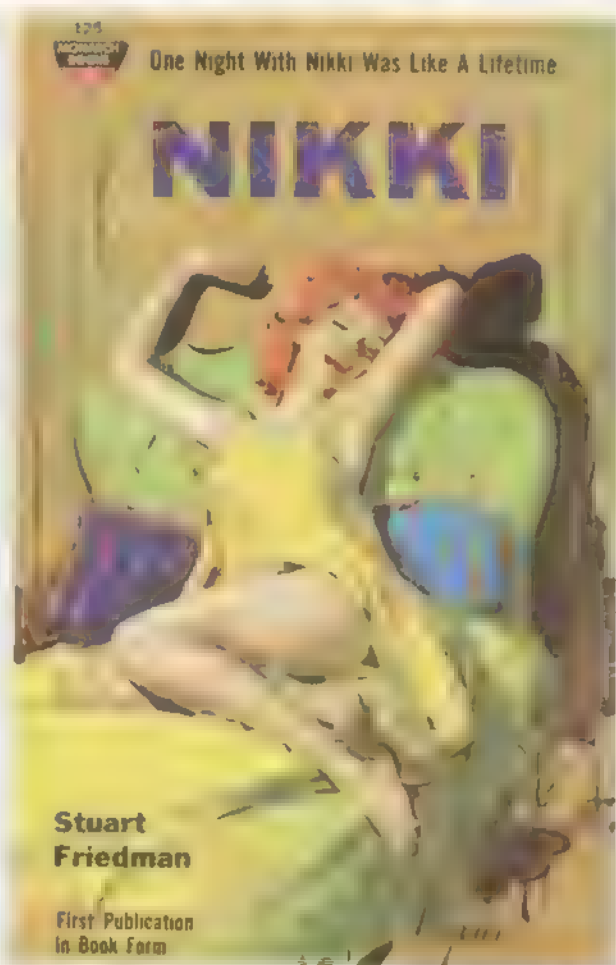
Bettie had no artistic genius like Vittorio DeSica or Federico Fellini to help her, not even a Roger Vadim. No Svengali. She designed her own act. She styled her hair like the classic femme fatales, Cleopatra, Anna Mae Wong, and Milton Caniff's Miss Lane. She cut it herself, painted her own lips and posed in borrowed underwear and shoes, often several sizes too big.

While other pinup models grew hard, performing for crass male attention and usually quit after a couple of months or years, Bettie worked-out daily — to keep her figure as shapely as those voluptuous youngsters from France and Italy — and kept improving her act, kept playing the common, sultry, joyous, unfashionable, out-of-the-loop, non-establishment, sassy, trashy, street girl. The European beauties may have won the battle in the major media, but Bettie more than held her own on the pages of the men's magazines. In the fifties, no American beauty could compete with her act — except for her sisters in sin on the covers of paperback novels.



Right: Above, *Movie Star News* photos of Bettie tied up and with whip gave her a sensibility not even Europe's stars could match. Below: amateur photo of Bettie, featuring a typical "funky" background.





## The Paperback Cover Artists

...the lurid, two-bit, pocket-sized covers that first hit the newsstands in 1939 had become delightfully subversive. But it had taken awhile.

In the early forties, when paperback books first became part of the public's reading habit, nearly every book was a reprint of a classic, with a designed, often illustrated, cover in imitation of hardcover novels. In 1948, Popular Library hired pulp-magazine cover artist Hugh Belarski to do its covers. His paintings had narrative tension, mystery, and often and almost always featured a dramatically voluptuous female.

Belarski's innovation was a shocking success. The industry took note, and a whole new marketplace opened up to America's aspiring artists.

In May of 1951, the content of paperbacks also changed when Gold Medal published original novels aimed directly at the paperback readership. *Women's Barracks* sold 2,036,048 copies, *House of Flesh* 1,800,212 and *Hill Girl* 1,226,890. Other titles sold far less, but the new trend was set, and the other companies began to publish their own originals.

The writing in these novels was normally pedestrian but had a style, pace, and most of all, a point of view that was unlike anything America had read before. Principal characters consisted of low-down rural types, junkies, unrepentant killers, criminal heroes and your average low-rent working girls. Frenzied action drove the plots, only slowing down for torrid sex scenes. Nothing sexually explicit happened, but it was clear the driving passion between male and female was not romance. There was no sentiment, little morality, and the "wow finishes" were frequently depressing.

But the covers were exhilarating.

Pocketbook illustrators celebrated color, action and predatory females — backwoods tramps, gun molls, juvenile delinquents and you name it. If the illustration didn't give you the message, the titles did: *White Trash*, "Leg Art" *Virgin*.



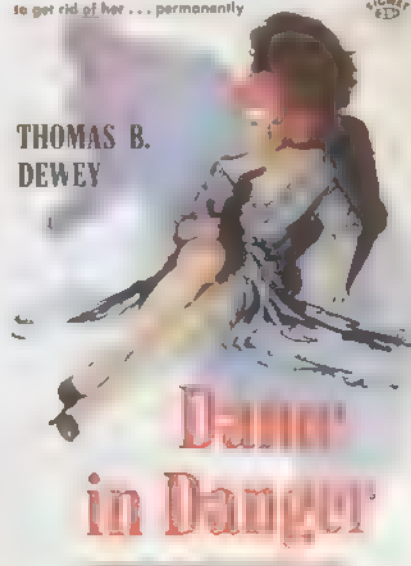
## The Obituary Club

Where does a man with a face known to every movie fan in America go to hide from a killer?

HIGH PENTECOST

She was the wife of an ex-gangster who wanted to get rid of her ... permanently

THOMAS B. DEWEY



## Dancer in Danger

A SIGNET BOOK COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

937

SIGNET

Bohemian Life in a Wicked City

# Goodbye to Berlin

CHRISTOPHER  
HERWOOD



A SIGNET BOOK  
Complete and Unabridged

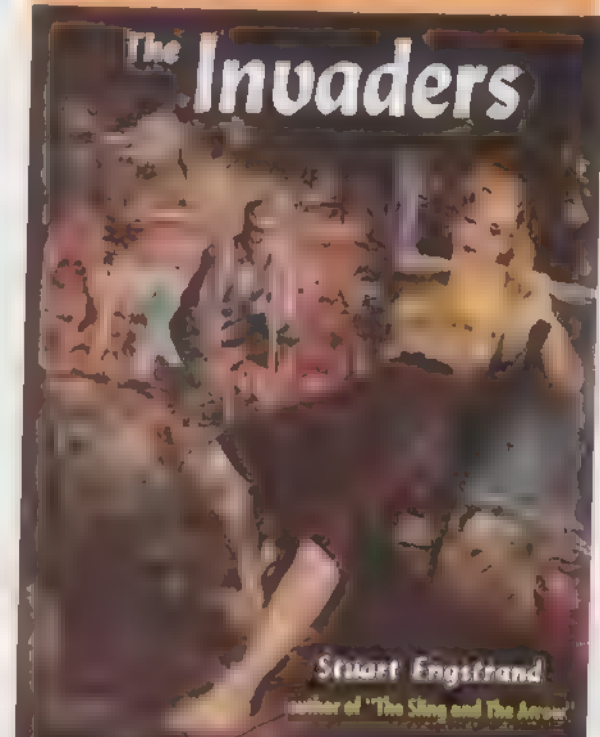
SIGNET

Could She Live With One Man While Loving Another?

# The Invaders

Stuart Engstrand

author of "The Sling and The Arrow"



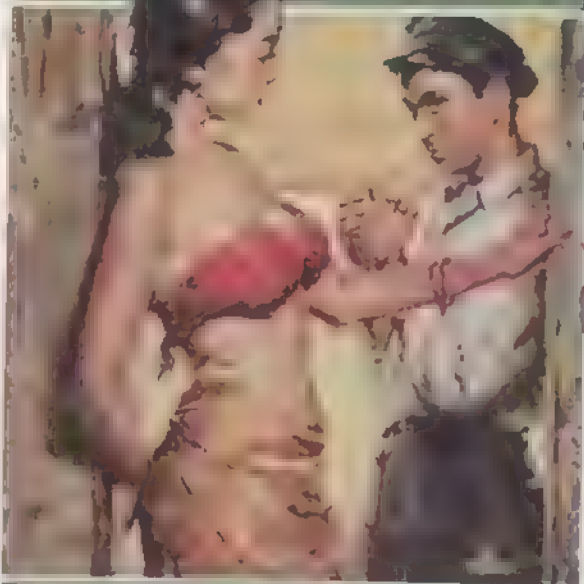
A SIGNET BOOK  
Complete and Unabridged

SIGNET

Sailors, Smugglers, Streetwalkers & Schemers

# A Private Stair

DAVID LOUGHLIN



A SIGNET BOOK  
Complete and Unabridged

435



25c

Her eyes said love, but her  
heart said murder—murder  
done to the music of Spanish gold

# The Dangerous One

ROBERT AMES





*Kiss Me Quick, Jailbait, Tomboy, and  
Wash Your Racket*

And the cover blurbs spelled it out, like  
the one for Orrie Hitt's *Dirt Farm*:  
"Where farm girls known as undomes-  
tated animals?"

By 1952, the federal government  
became alarmed and the House of  
Representatives' Gathings Commission  
on Current Pornographic Materials con-  
cluded it was time for the government to  
regulate the interstate and international  
transportation of "immoral, offensive and  
otherwise undesirable matter." For five or six  
months, the paperback industry retreated  
and censored itself, then reverted to form  
and the industry boomed again.

In 1953, *The Facts of Life* sold one-and-a-  
half million copies and Mickey Spillane's  
*Kiss Me Deadly* sold three million.

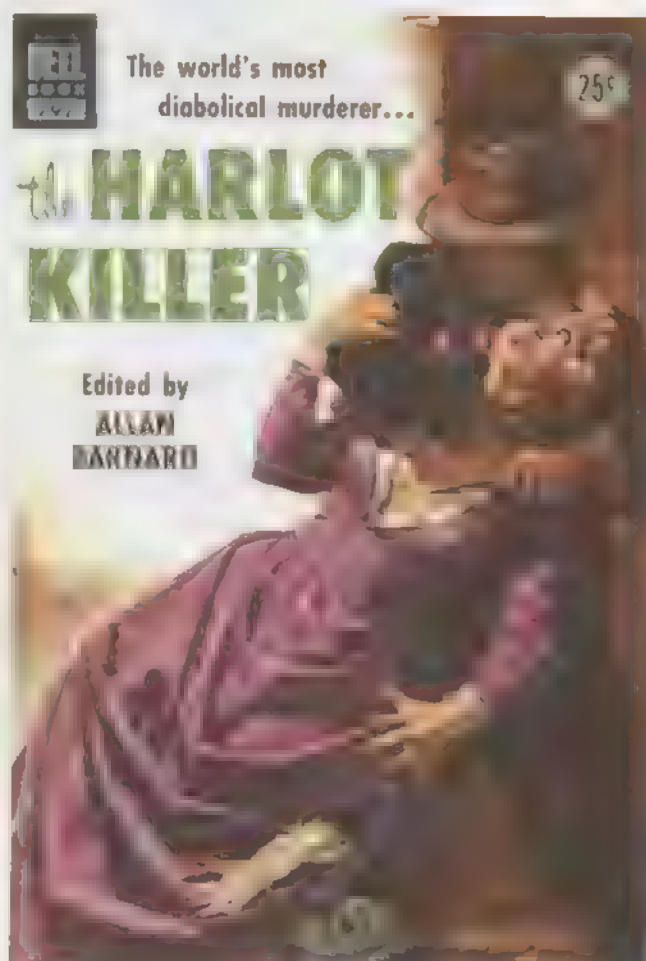
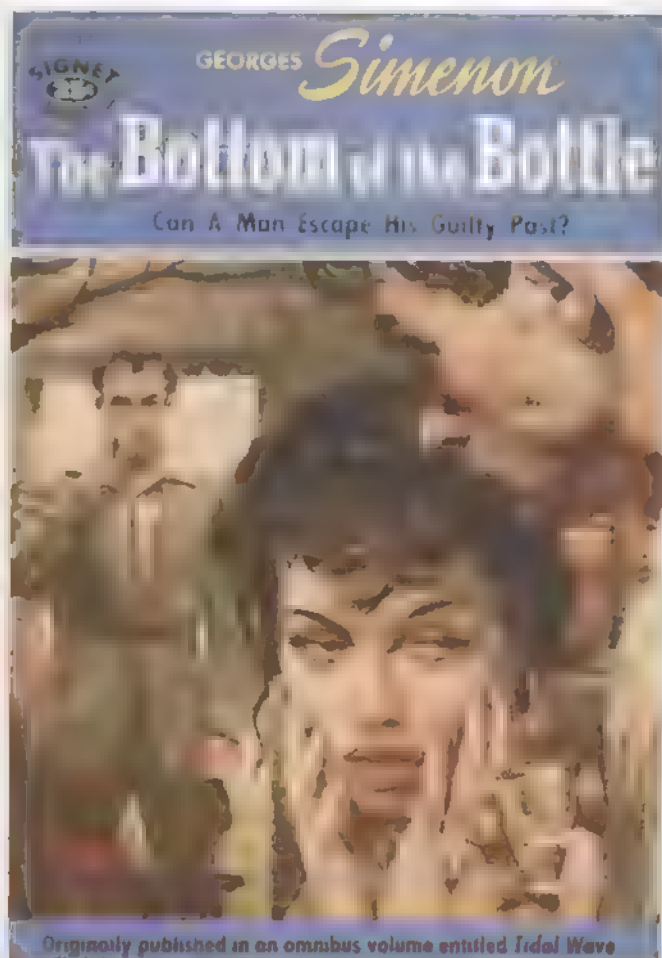
As a result of this success, a stable mar-  
ket for illustrated covers formed, and a  
group of artists gathered in and around  
New York to supply that market's  
demand. Among them were artists who  
could draw and paint: James Avati,  
William George, Mitchell Hooks, Robert  
Maguire, James Meese, Stanley Meltzoff,  
Bryce Phillips and Stanley Zuckerberg.

These artists, like so many other popular  
artists, writers and composers before  
them, were considered commercial hacks  
by their contemporaries, and they knew  
it. Avati recalls the paperback covers as  
"a training field, a stepping stone, a  
well-paying school — never an end in  
itself — as soon as you got good, you moved  
on to better fields." Meltzoff remembers,  
"It was a great place for beginners, but  
a penance and shame for older workers."

Today, collectors seek out and pay high  
prices for those old covers. There is a  
naiveté, a passionate raw energy and  
originality in them — to say nothing of  
the talent and craftsmanship — that  
continues to charm and entertain.  
Unlike the modernist and post-  
modernist painters, the paperback cover  
artists were not motivated to lead soci-  
ety, nor were they intimidated by the  
modernists into rejecting narrative art.  
On the contrary, they embraced it.



Right: Photo by Paula Klaw for Movie Star News. Opposite: Paperback  
novel covers. Above, by James Avati. Below, by James Meese



The field of paperback cover art had an area where no other field offered these artists. They got to paint real characters, with messy hair, too much lipstick, pressed pants, dirty jeans and dirty hands. Common people, lowbrows on the whole, highbrows carrying guns and the cool and low-down. Beauties and bastards, not people defined by "uptown" art directors or merchandising research. Avati remembers the normal "slick" illustration of that period, "It was always the same pretty people, painted in the same pretty way. But how could you possibly believe that human beings are always beautiful?"

Avati specialized in a version of the "lash-can" school of painting, portraying rural and urban realism, primarily employing non-professional models. He had a host of imitators and many artists consider him the field's best.

Maguire painted the sinners, usually at the moment they were about to sin. He specialized in vivid, voluptuous and masterfully drawn and painted street women, as well as exotic, pagan priestesses.

George was the super draftsman, and a workhorse. He understood period clothing and could draw the figure, vehicles, animals, buildings, boats, trains, furniture and almost everything else in any position.

Meese started as part of the Avati school but quickly developed his own style, specializing in foreign and ethnic beauties.

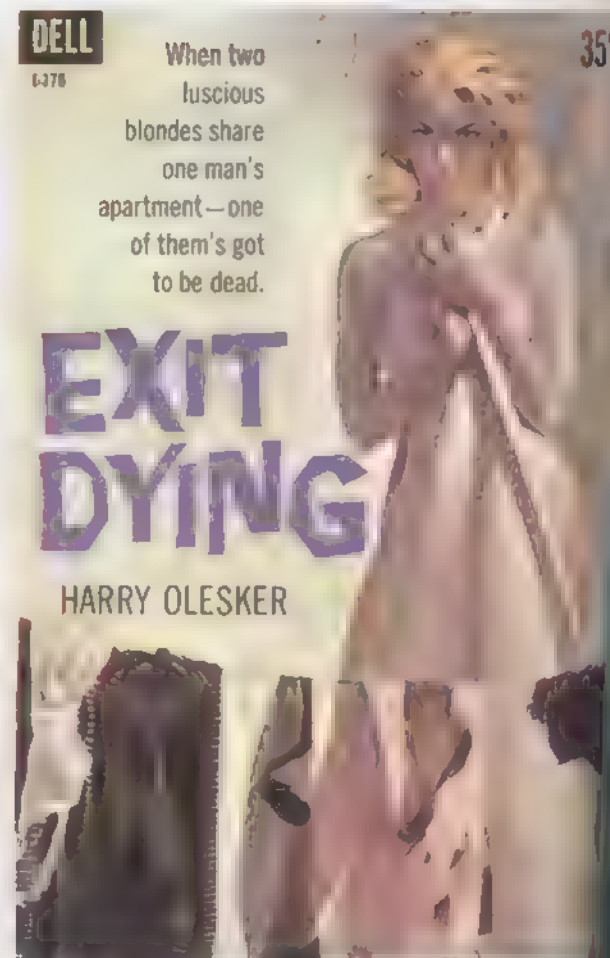
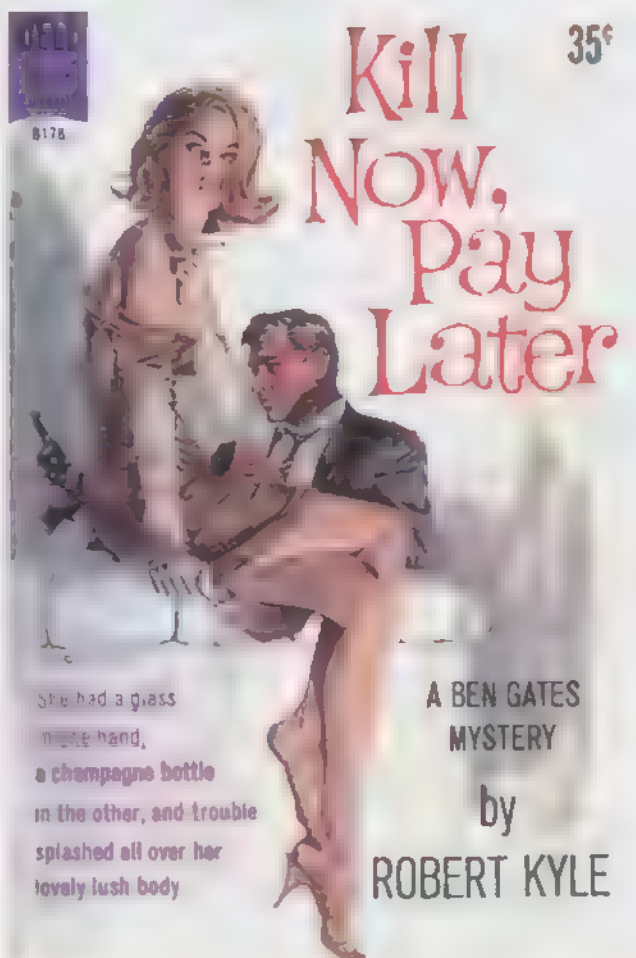
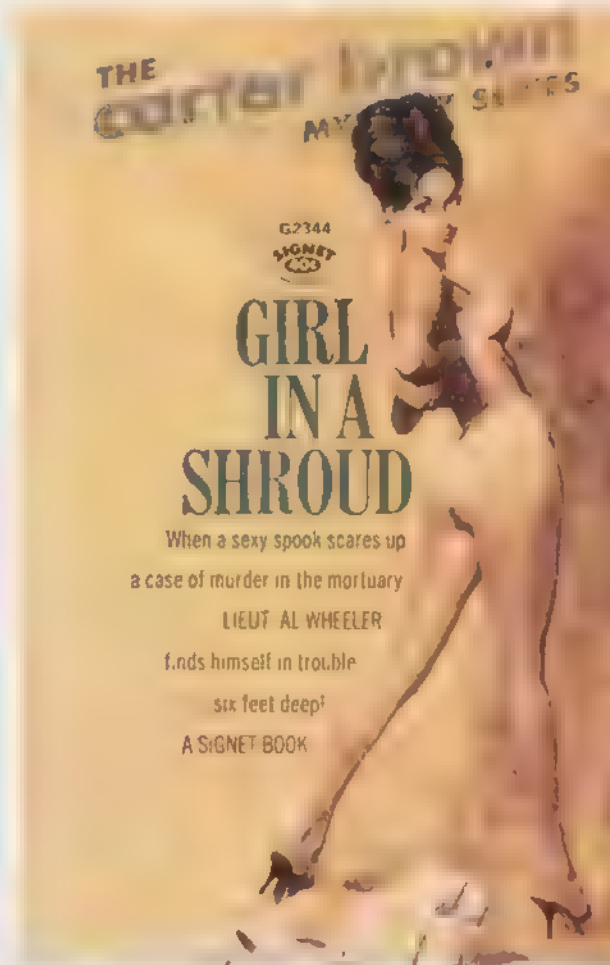
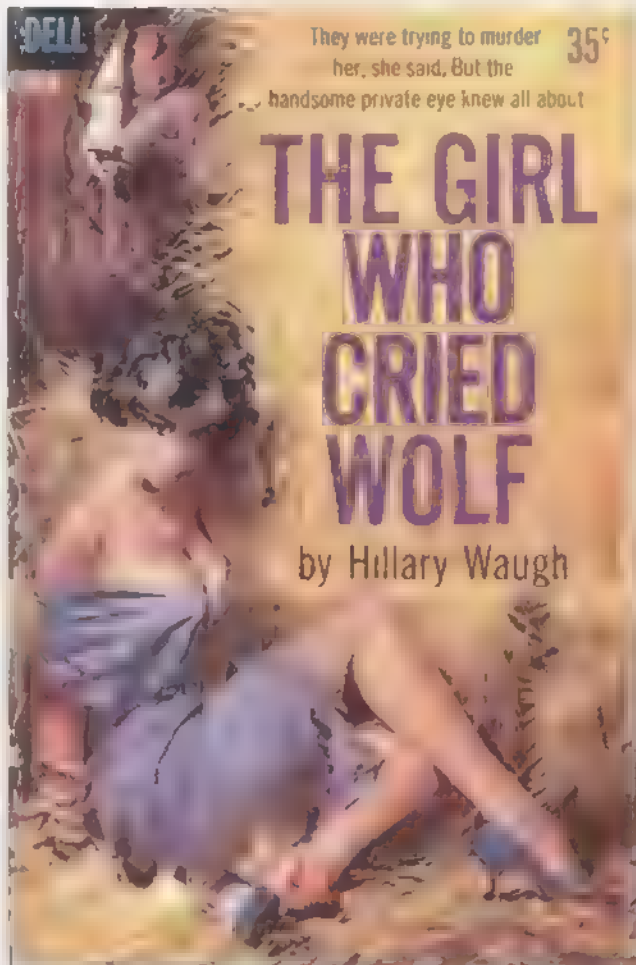
Zuckerberg was the painter supreme, arriving at the publishing houses with five- and six-foot canvases. His specialties were exotic and period subjects.

Phillips, the fastest of the bunch, probably had the best "scrap" file and could change his style with each assignment.



Right: Photo by Burny Yeager. Opposite: Paperback novel covers. Above left, by Bayre Phillips. Above right, by Stanley Zuckerberg. Bottom left by William George. Bottom right, by Rudolph Belarski.





In late 1957, a young artist named Robert "Bob" McGinnis arrived in New York portfolio in hand, seeking work. His first stop was the Cooper Studio, which only made sense. His idol, Garry Whimore, worked there, and his ambition was to paint beautiful, stylish women for the major women's magazines. When the Cooper Studio turned him down, it was fortuitous for the paperback world and illustration in general. Bob is the last of a long line of American artists including Charles Dana Gibson, Howard Chandler Christy, Harrison Fisher, Coles Phillips, Armstrong, Petty and Vargas — to be known for a particular female image that can only be adequately defined by his name, the "McGinnis Girl."

McGinnis' first cover appeared August 1958, on Dell book #985, *So Young, So Cold, So Fair*. His first assignment, from art director Walter Brooks at Dell, had been for two covers, the second appearing in October 1958, on Dell First Edition #A167, *Built For Trouble*.

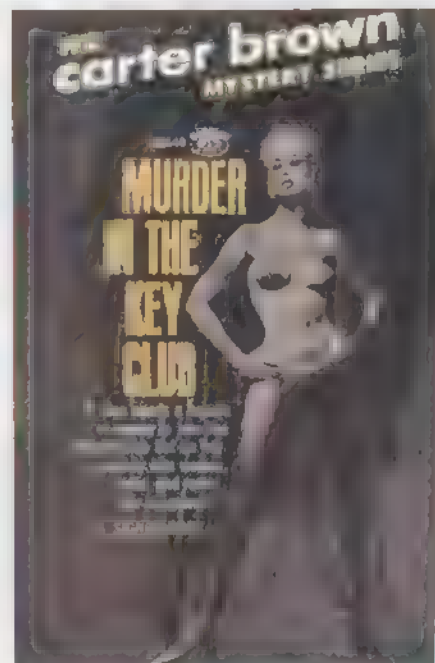
The subjects of both covers were exquisite women, versions of the predatory females for which the pint-sized books were famous. But even in the early McGinnis images, there were already hints of an uncommon, aesthetic maturity. As a draftsman, McGinnis draws the figure and face — their structure, features and gestures — so skillfully that they reveal the interior of his subject as well as the exterior. They are almost always images of stylish, classy women living the good life, but often their surface is only a mask for something dark and deadly going on inside. There was ready demand for his covers by the publishers of mystery and crime novels.



She was  
Hollywood's biggest  
box-office star  
courtesy of

**The Flesh  
Merchants**

BOB THOMAS



Right and opposite: Paperback novel covers painted by Robert McGinnis in the fifties and sixties. Above right from *A Good Year For Dwarfs?* by Carter Brown, A Signet Mystery, P4320





## Unwashed Aesthetics

As for the work of the aforementioned [artists] in the performances of *de la Loten* and *Lollobrigida*, and in the photographic images of Bettie, is a certain aesthetic principle. At times it is as subtle as the expression behind Bettie's face, or the languor of a McGinnis Girl. At other times it is as obvious as Avati's *woods realism* or Bettie sitting on a wooden chair holding a whip. The principle at work is stated by playwright Jean Cocteau, "The only source of beauty is a child." No doubt some of the illustrators and filmmakers — perhaps all of them — consciously applied this principle. Though it probably never occurred to Bettie, it was at work during her photo sessions, and that quality makes her images unique, memorable.

But what unified her sugar-candy technique and unwashed aesthetic into the artistic whole which we now know as the paper Bettie was, of course, Bettie herself. The *real* Bettie.



Above and right: Bettie's media made her bad, her performance made it pay. Opposite: Photo by Bunny Yeager





# NUDE

*There is but  
one master here. You.*

*—The Beast from Beauty and the Beast*

In 1978, Belier Press published volume *Lone of Private Peeks*, with its cover announcing, "Now! The Betty Page you only imagined back in the fabulous '50s! Timid to torrid . . . unpublished fotos from private collections! The Betty Page you never got to see!"

It was true. There was Bettie, stark naked, and not under the counter, but out in the open.

By 1978, the American media had removed all codes and social mores governing the explicit exposure of the human body. Nude scenes took place in nearly every movie. Burlesque strippers could no longer get work, their jobs taken by amateurs dancing buck naked inside

cages. "Girl books" with graphic frontal nudity on nearly every page glutted the newsstands, and the fifth-grade basketball team at the local grammar school had seen more images of naked women than the entire male population of 1948.

The media had reduced the beautiful nude female body to the commonplace, made it tedious, and in the process destroyed the power of the exotic image. More than a few people wished the girls posing on the pages of those "rags" would put their clothes back on.

The Belier photos of Bettie, at first sight, elicited the same response. They were similar to those you see on the accompanying pages and were taken by amateurs

at private sessions. Most of those here were photographed by Bob Collins in 1951 at a Manhattan camera club. Other, nearly identical, photos have surfaced to testify to the fact that at least five other amateurs, and possibly twenty or thirty, attended the same photo shoot. It was a situation Bettie handled often. From the first day of her modeling career to the last month in 1957, Bettie posed for camera clubs. They were one of her primary sources of money.

Working for a crowd of amateurs obviously put severe limitations on Bettie's performance. In these photos, the angles are bad. The props distract rather than add a touch of funky reality as in the Klaw photos. The lighting is awful.





... it is evident that they still  
... "Bettie" quality.

... part of that quality is her  
... designed body. Simply posed  
... nondescript background, there  
... enough design elements in her  
... survive the technical incompe-  
... make a graphically satisfying  
... The intangible quality of her per-  
... on, on the other hand, is somehow  
... more manifest by that incompe-  
... If you focus on her face, it is  
... that the camera — even in an  
... 's hands — is in love with her.

... the telling factor: it is the  
... 's affection for Bettie that allows  
... paper girl to tell us something about  
... 's girl.

... process occurs frequently with movie  
... When you flatten the images of  
... James Dean or Marilyn Monroe to two  
... dimensions and project them on a screen  
... their heads are thirty feet high, you  
... can see inside them, past their perform-  
... ances, into their true character, with all  
... its pride, strength, weakness, vulnera-  
... bility. You can see their souls. And if  
... there's something there worth seeing, as  
... with Dean and Monroe, that's what makes  
... them stars. It is not what the stars hide  
... but what they reveal that creates their  
... mystique, their magic. Somehow Bettie  
... had the strength of character to manage  
... the same trick on a 4"x 5" glossy.

The opposite could, of course, be argued,  
that her flirty personality is simply the  
natural defense of a perky girl trying to  
fend off a bunch of horny male predators  
upon whom her livelihood depended. But  
Bettie's story is not the tale of an  
exploited woman. She was no victim.  
What you're looking at is a proud, inde-  
pendent woman who went against the  
grain of her time, ignored the mockery  
and degrading rejection of polite society  
and remained true to herself.

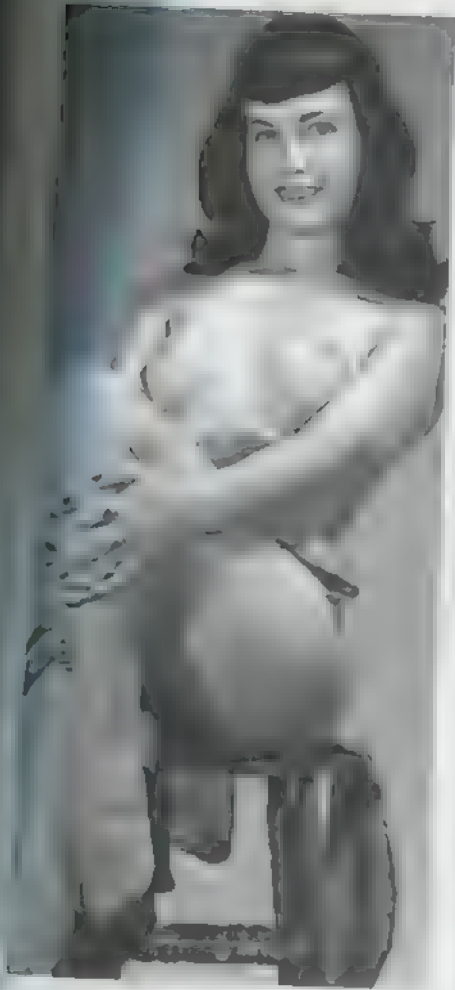
If you doubt it, take another look.

Despite the amateurish, even sleazy, situ-  
ation in which the pictures were taken,  
Bettie is in control and conveys a sense of  
healthy well-being and joy. She's doing  
exactly what she wants to do and doing it  
with the style, charm and talent that has  
made her the first, and probably the last,  
"paper star."

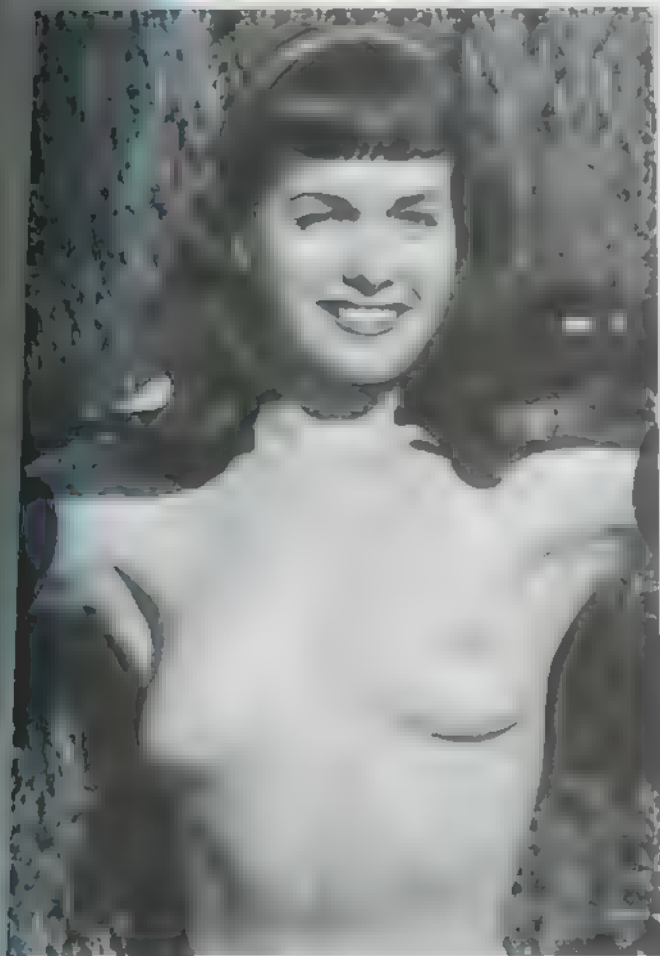






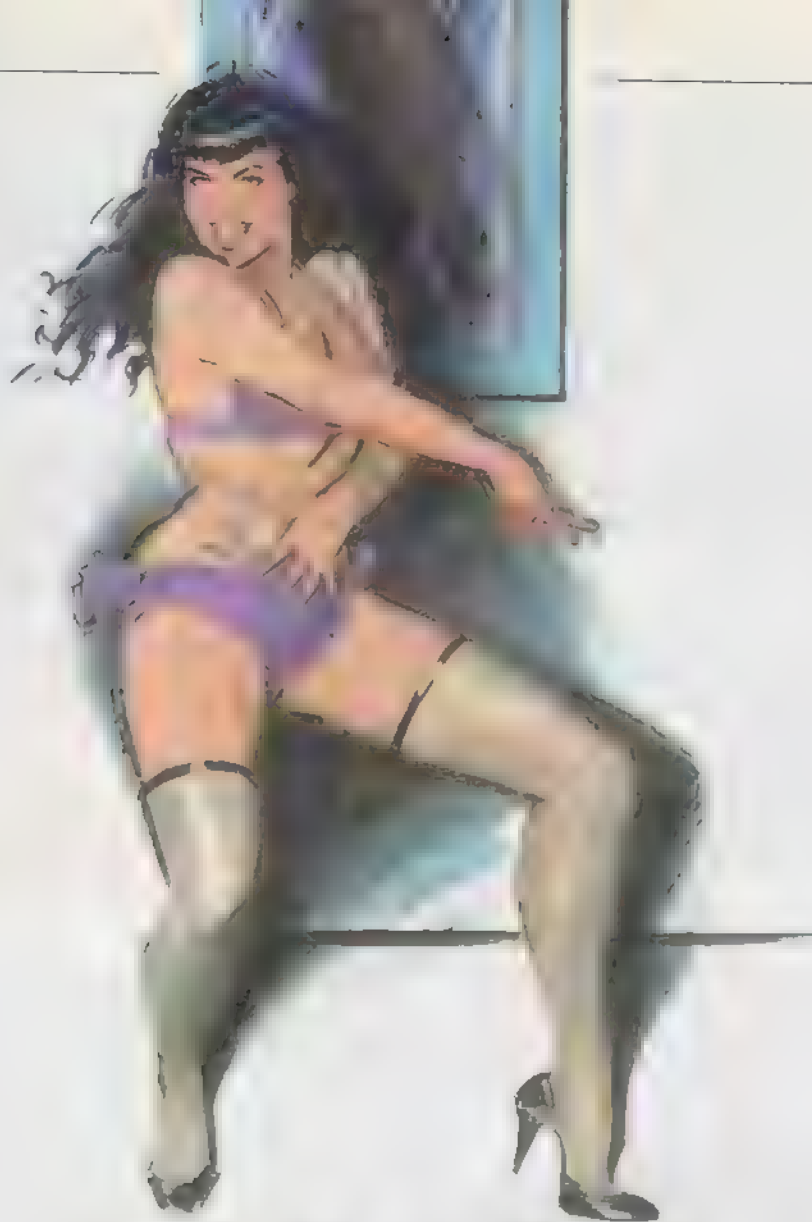












## DRAW ME

*From you we learn, Queens are made  
from distance and dyed flesh.*

—Edgar Degas

**T**housands of years ago, cave dwellers drew on the walls of their caves, pictures of the animals they stalked. They believed the drawings gave them a magical control over their source of food. Nobody knows if the magic worked, but making drawings of subjects that ignite passion and curiosity in the artist is an activity that has been with our species so long it can only be classified as a basic human instinct. But in the fifties, this truth was out of fashion.

In those days, modernists dominated the art schools, even those specializing in representational art, and the model was thought of as an object, a starting place for the artist to create his or her own two-dimensional world. The instructors

validated this dogma with more dogma, claiming that Degas' paintings were not of ballet dancers, horses and nudes, but of geometric shapes, lines and color — that they were objects of art, not images of women bathing and drying themselves.

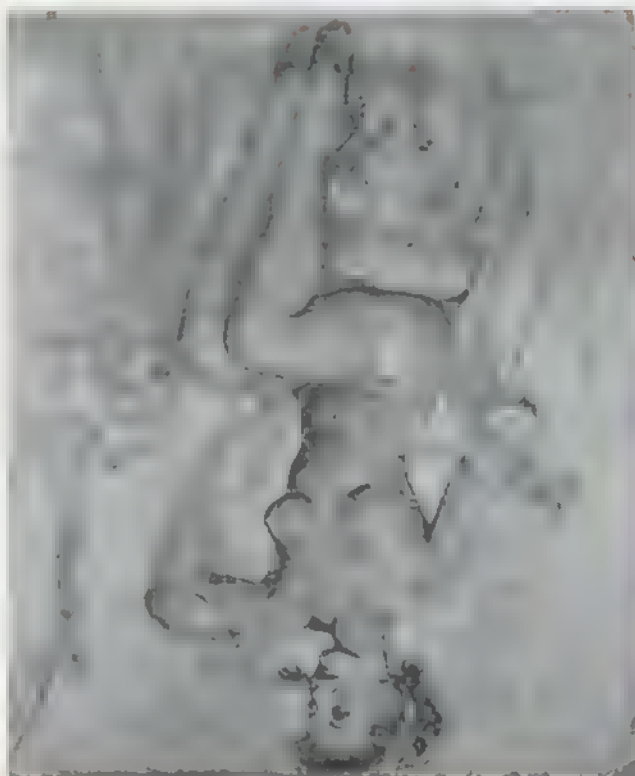
Given this, eager young artists determined to learn to draw the human figure and depict personality and character had to look elsewhere for help. Fortunately, those who liked drawing Bettie found what they were looking for in the same place they found her.

George Von Rosen, the publisher of *Art Photography*, *Modern Man*, *Figure Quarterly* and *Figure Annual*, printed not only photographs to draw from — of

expressionless nude art models, carefully arranged in statuelike poses and draped in discreet shadows — but articles on figure artists who had a different slant on drawing nudes. Von Rosen magazines featured an article on the English figure painter, Sir William Russel Flint; another on one of the top "slick" magazine illustrators of that time, Ben Stahl; and several on "girl cartoonists" like Jefferson Machamer. There were also pieces on "pinup" artists Alberto Vargas and K.O. Munson and a couple on Gillette Elvgren. These artists did not dismiss their subjects as trivial objects but were preoccupied with them — their hair, muscles, bones, their fabulous figures and beautiful features. The cartoonists, Flint and Elvgren were also interested in their subjects' personalities.







Above: Cover for *Draw at Home* '952  
Right: Drawing by Ed Engren which  
appeared in *Modern Man* magazine in the  
early fifties  
Below: Illustration by Sir William Russell  
First for *Judith*, published by The  
Haymarket Press, London 1928



Opposite Above: Drawing from *Drawings*  
by Sir William Russell First 1950 which  
was published in *Modern Man* magazine  
in 1953 Below: photo by Barry Yeager

Somewhere in my pursuit, I came across the idea that abstract art was a protective device artists used to keep themselves from being overwhelmed by reality, a defense against the everyday onslaught of human emotions, a defense against the senses. That idea went together with another idea I found someplace else, that for the artist, the model is an essential link with reality — and that modern art was stillborn because it failed to make that link. Now I was getting somewhere. Then

leads to a never-ending search. I learn how to create them yourself, and that with the same skill and affection but to only see more and more drawings made satisfying a need, it creates a desire to not just be contagious, adding. Rather than people is evident in his drawings, and that Nevertheless, Loomis' love of drawing adventure magazines I normally prefer ability found in the illustrations for men's without the dramatic action and sensu- and his figures are graceful and ladylike, failed for the "slick" women's magazines, - criticism are doing today. Loomis illus- new generation of artists eager to become paper girls I had tried to draw, just as a were, on page 109, was one of the first *for All It's Worth*, published in 1943. I art book I'd bought. *Figure Drawing* Rediscovering Loomis. I went back to the

and Andrew Loomis.

William, Robert Rawcell, Noel Sickles, John, Ladell, Hudson Sumblum, John, head Cornwell, Joseph Clement Cole, and Wilcox Smith J.C. Leventhal, Howard Pale, Charles Dana Gibson, have been to the American illustrators, society of the Australian artist Norman met in the others that had led to the books and pictures by Phil Elygreen, 'what I later discovered many other I had in the Von Rosen magazines, created by the artwork and points of

spirit of the girl behind the smile. I realize not only her physical beauty that was always a compulsion body but ended by making a ph- began with the intention of doing what I realized a process I under-

being alive. It shouldn't be But especially important is "it is very important" Elygreen



... the Howard Pyle, the father of the illustration, instructed his life-students not only to render the pose of the model but to give that figure the character, suggesting they even pick up a name, thus, "converting the model into the individual."

He did it. Out with big ideas, in with the detail — with drawing the human, the particular — the way the muscles sit on the rib cage, the lazy eye, the mouth, the smile, whatever.

"Look at those fingernails," Edgar Degas exclaimed to a friend upon viewing an artist's drawing. "See how they are indicated? That's my idea of genius, a man who finds a hand so lovely, so wonderful, so difficult to render, that he will shut himself in all his life, content to do nothing but render fingernails."

It does not sound to me like an artist content with rendering geometric shapes, but a man in love with creation.

Inevitably, this process of questioning the dogma of the modernist establishment leads to a re-examination of Rembrandt, Inuksei, Van Gogh and Utamaro as well as Degas. All of them worked outside the establishments of their time, and all were primarily interested in, curious about, and intensely influenced by their subject matter. Subject matter that was inevitably common, base, human, non-establishment, yet uniquely beautiful.

Utamaro's work, done in the Ukiyo-e tradition during Japan's Tokugawa period, got all the respect comic books and "pulp" get today. Nevertheless, his images of geishas, courtesans, prostitutes and actresses are among the most ravishing female images ever created. He knew all about geometric shapes, color and line but used them as tools — tools that revealed not only the surface, but the inner life of his subjects: a *Tipsy Woman*, *Low-Down Woman*, *Good for Nothing* — rather than as ends in themselves.

Modern examples of the same process are the two drawings on these pages by Frank Frazetta. Drawn in the early fifties, they are studies for a paperback cover: Ellie Frazetta. Frank's wife, was the model. Those of us who know her can identify her immediately, but they are not drawings of Ellie. The girl is a combination of Ellie's



From top: Illustration by Norman Lindsay for a title page in *Lyssistrata*, a special print by Alberto Vargas bound into *Figure Quarterly*; turning and twisting, from *Figure Drawing for All It's Worth*, by Andrew Loomis, The Viking Press, 1943. Opposite: *Bettie* by Silke





personality and image and Frank's extraordinary imagination and skill, particularly his use of line. He obviously indicates the texture and weight of exaggerated breasts, the folds of the waist, the attitude of the pose and facial expression and the fingers and toes. With nothing more than a 6B pencil — which he uses like a brush — and colored pencils, he created what has become known as a "Good-for-Nothing Girl."

There is a Chinese poem which, in its own enigmatic way, defines the principle at work in draftsmen like Utamaro and Frazer. It says, "He who values a picture for its resemblance, has the critical faculty nearly near to that of a child." But then it adds, "Art produces something beyond the form of things, though its importance lies in preserving the form of things."

This principle also guided Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Degas, just as it did Evygen, Petty, Whitmore, Maguire, McGinnis, Caniff, Capp, Raymond and Crane. That some of these artists are considered geniuses and others commercial hacks, that some exhibit in the Louvre and others in dime comics, makes no difference. There is no highbrow or lowbrow in art, no class or social distinction. All that is required is a subject and an artist with the desire, the need, to put an image of that subject, and all that it implies or suggests, on paper.

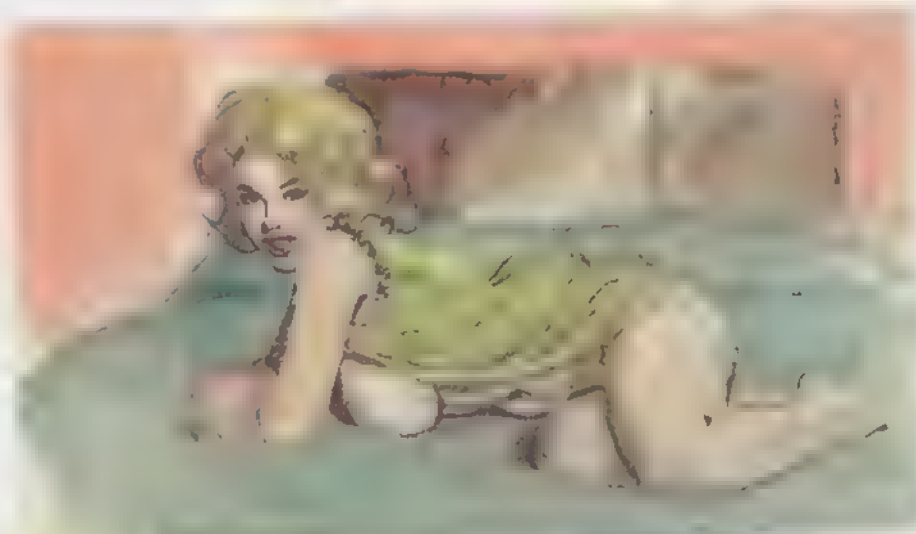
The link between Bettie and narrative art is her image; it says, "Draw me, both what you see and what you don't see."

Dave Stevens understands this. That's why, when Bettie first appeared in his comic book, *The Rocketeer*, the essential ingredients in the images of her were not only her face and figure, but her personality, vitality and delight. In the spiritual sense, we learn more about Bettie in Stevens' comics than we do from reading all that has been written about her.

Narrative art has power, the ability to create dream worlds in which heroes and heroines, solitary figures of discovery and adventure, prevail. It can perpetuate the magic of adoration and hope and overcome the magic of despair. Besides, the modernist idea that art is too important to be wasted on people never made any sense, never will. And the notion that you



Right: A Good-for-Nothing print by Utamaro 1802. Below: Two "roughs" drawn in the early fifties by Frank Frazetta for a paperback novel cover titled *The Intruder*, which was never finished. Opposite: Top-hat Bettie by William George.







stop looking at girls because some  
sisters have persuaded themselves  
they have a better idea is simply  
bunk.

could be fun. And it's particularly  
drawing your own Bettie. But beware.

isn't a passive paper girl, eager to  
go to whatever your feverish imagina-  
tions desire. She never was. No matter how  
good a draftsman you are, Bettie can take  
you beyond the borders of your imagina-  
tion, to a theatrical style and spirit  
you may not know exists, and introduce  
you to a character, a woman, unlike any  
you've met before. But that's the point.

at her.

right Bettie by illustrator Mitchell Hooks  
above. Above, a recent Dave Stevens Bettie the likeness is there  
much more. Below left, a delightfully animated Betty drawn by  
the Stevens for *The Rocketeer* comic book in 1982. Below right  
Betty by Silke

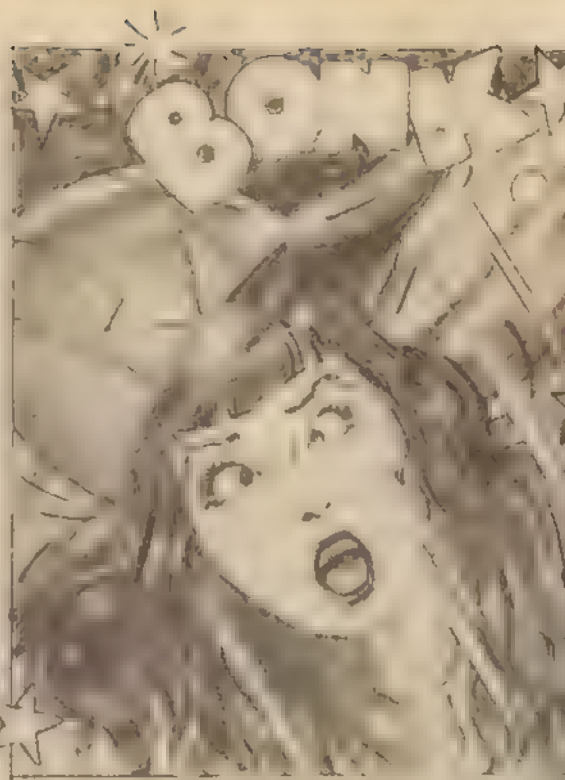
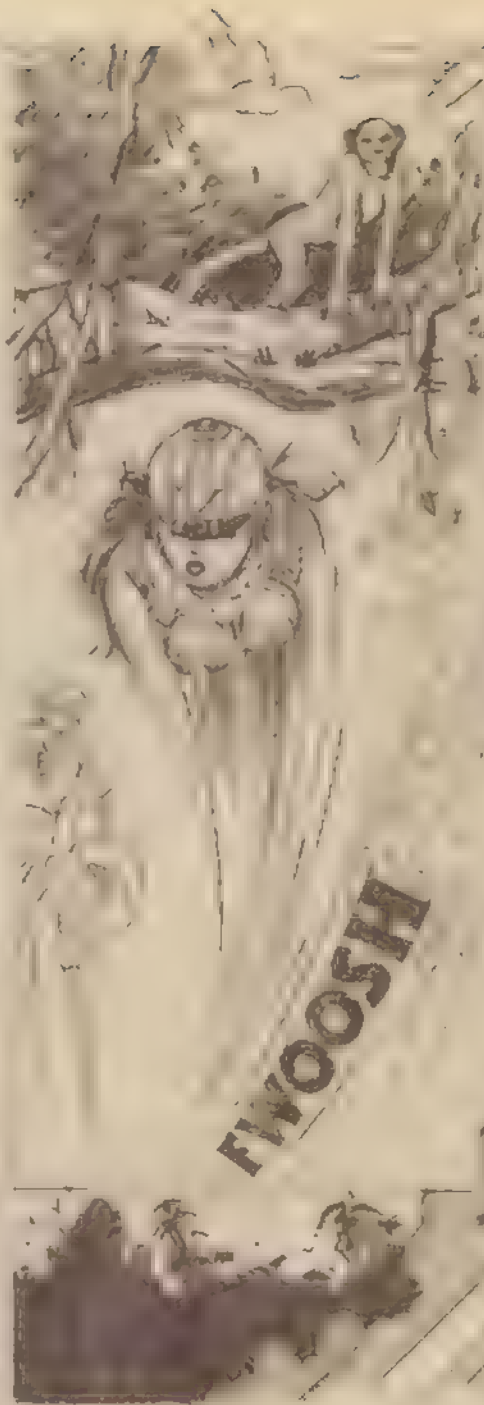






Above: Bettie by Silke, Opposite: Swimsuit Bettie by Mark Westermose







Above: Amateur photo of Bettie.  
Opposite: Page rough by Silke for the forthcoming comic, *Spicy Adventure*, starring Bettie Page





The McGinnis Bettie

Robert McGinnis was commissioned to do the drawing on the opposite page for this book. But, as he worked on it, something stirred his creative forces. "I'd never drawn a girl like her before," he says, "and became curious. The result was this oil painting."







# JUNGLE GIRL

*She is beautiful, and almost completely recovered from the sleeping sickness.*  
—Bomba from *Bomba and the Jungle Girl*

There is nothing in all of fiction as trivial and absurd as a savage, white, jungle girl, swinging through the trees of a tropical rain forest, decked out in a leopard-skin bikini styled by some high-priced Hollywood costume designer.

It's loony.

Yet the images of Ulah, Cobra Woman, Ts'ama, Nikotris and Jane, oh, yes, Jane, are indelibly etched in the history of American pop culture with the features of Dorothy Lamour, Maria Montez, Maureen O'Sullivan and the brilliant colors of the Sunday funnies. For many, their names alone — Lota, Lona, Liane, Rulah, Sheena, Nyoka and Sanna — still stir up images of all that fabulous, wild hokum:

Nikotris calling forth the river gods to ravage the soul of Tarzan with the lash of primitive hate and pagan love, Kathleen Burke being transformed from the body of a beast into the Panther Woman, Yvonne DeCarlo dropping her veils, Dolores Del Rio dancing to calm the Mountain of Fire, Jane listening to Tarzan explain the mysteries of the Mutba Escarpment, and Ann Corio or Hedy LaMarr in *White Cargo* declaring, "I am Tondelayo."

Even though the zany images of these tropical cutups are beneath serious consideration, they nevertheless elicit a welcome lightness of mind and emotion, a freedom from the rule of reason. Bettie elicits the same response. Her physical image merges perfectly with the outrageous

legend of the lost white child raised by leopards to become a Jungle Goddess.

Bettie played the jungle girl part often for Paula Klaw, Bunny Yeager and other photographers. She even performed with a gorilla on the pages of *Beauty Parade*. But at the time Bettie was beginning her career, the theatrical tradition that had given birth to jungle girls was ending.

By 1954, *Jungle Comics*, *Jumbo Comics*, *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, *Hut Comics*, *Wings Comics*, *Fight Comics*, *Terrors of the Jungle*, *Nyoka the Jungle Girl*, *Planet Comics*, *Smash Comics* and many other titles had all stopped publishing.

In the comic books that did hang around,





Clockwise from top left: A Leopard-skin-clad Bettie Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane in *Tarzan and His Mate*, 1933. Ann Corio as Swamp Woman. Maria Montez as Cobra Woman, 1943. To Anis in the "Tarzan" Sunday Times page, May 4, 1941 by Burne Hogarth

heroes began to take on "mean-  
ingful" social problems and turned  
their innocent vigor and joy gone.

Sunday funnies also changed. Milton  
Eisenstein pointed it out many years later.  
"Raymond and I didn't realize that at  
the end of World War II the whole world  
could be recreated . . . It took a while for  
it to take place, but the 'Terry and the  
Pirates' way of thinking ended with World  
War II."

By the beginning of the fifties, that  
breeze had hit the cinema, and tragically.  
Most of the superb creative talents and  
great character actors had taken their last  
bow, and many of the stars — those bright  
lights who had lit the darkness at the  
picture show — were also going. An era  
was ending, and with it the spirit and style  
of a storytelling tradition as old as story-  
telling itself.

Author Anthony Caputi describes this tra-  
dition as the genius of popular, vulgar  
comedy, and gives its spirit a name: *buffo*.  
It's a name that defies definition and can  
only be identified in those stylized images  
that create within the spectator a state of  
exhilarated well-being, a happy madness,  
a joyous sense of sovereignty. An intense,  
powerful sense that confirms that force in  
human nature, that magical mysterious  
process which favors all that makes and  
celebrates life, and opposes all that seek  
to inhibit it.

Clockwise from top left: Nikolina in the "Tarzan" Sunday funnies, March  
5, 1933 by Harold Foster; Katharine Burke as the Panther Woman in  
*Friend of Lost Souls*, 1933; Yvonne De Carlo as Inez in *Casbah*, 1947;  
Fredy Lamm in chocolate make-up, as Tondelayo in *White Cargo*, 1942;  
Dolores Del Rio as Juana in *Bird of Paradise*, 1932.







like a jungle girl.

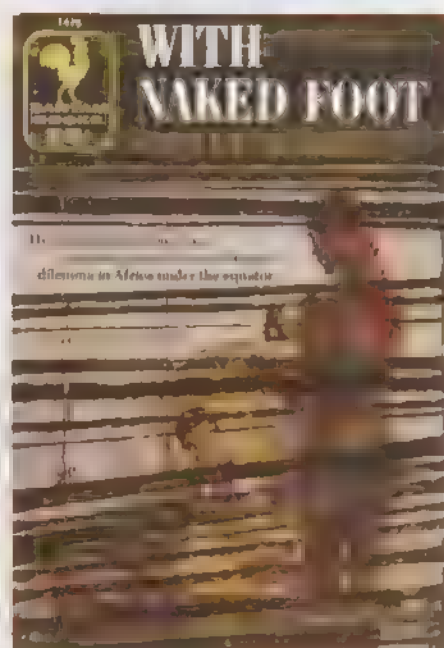
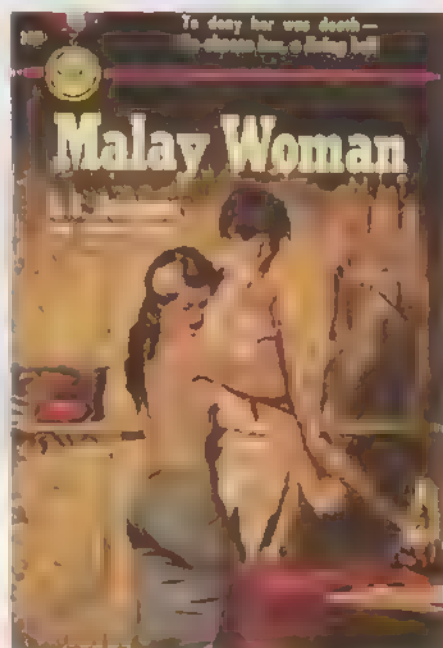
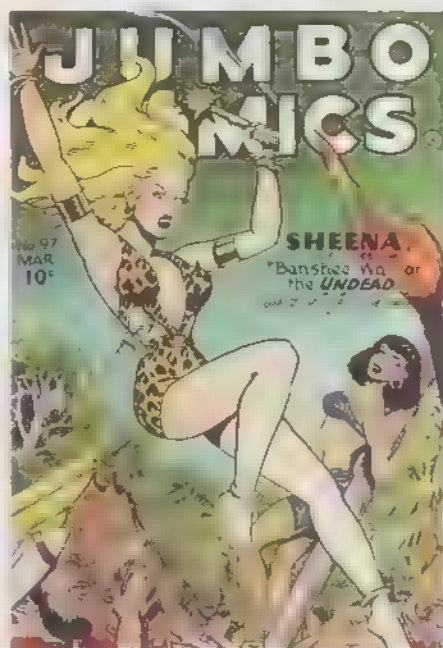
Looking back now, it's clear to me that the movies, movies, newspaper strips, paperbacks covers, "slick" illustrations, calendar art and comic books I loved were the natural evolution of *buffo*, the descendants of the ancient minstrels, the Feast of Fools, the carnival, *commedia dell'arte*, circus clowns, music halls, slapstick comedies and swashbucklers. They belonged to that storytelling tradition that embraces the popular, the commercial, the commonplace, the trashy and the profane, to that tradition of "illegitimate theater" that trades its artifice, celebrates all that is superficial — flesh, action, color — in order to contend with all that is real. *Buffo* recognizes that life is fundamentally chaotic, a ribald, painful, zany dream that will somehow turn out well. It pursues the exact opposite goals of accepted intellectual endeavor: takes seriously whatever society does not, and treats death, adultery and all "serious" subjects with the same irreverence and inevitability as the errant banana peel and pie in the face.

*Buffo* also exalts the pagan female and all her liturgical instruments: perfume, lipstick, jewelry, high heels, slinky fabrics and, thankfully, leopard spots. It luxuriates in the incarnate sexuality of the female, that destructive and/or creative life force beyond moral or rational control.

Just like Bettie.

For a brief period during the fifties and sixties, that style and spirit found an unusually receptive stage on the covers of the historical paperback novels, particularly when they were painted by McGinnis, Maguire, Meltzoff, Phillips, Darcy and Hooks. There was, and still is, fun in those covers, and no "arty" pretension. On occasion, they even painted a jungle girl.

The best of the jungle girls, of course, were created by Frank Frazetta for comic-book covers and fantasy paperbacks. He drew jungle girls unlike any seen before. They were black, ochre, umber, sienna and mustard as well as white, and, more often than not, armed to the teeth, dripping wet and flushed with sensuality.



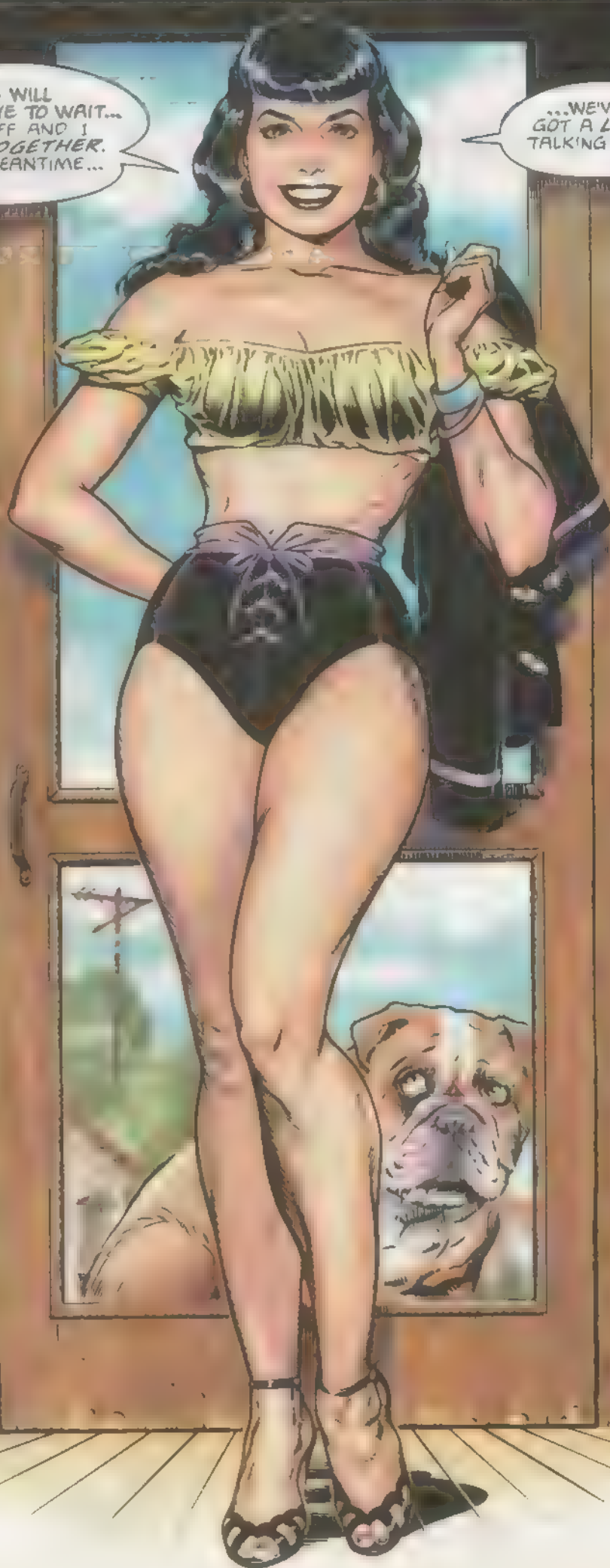
Right: Top, two comic-book covers by Joe Doolin. Middle, two pocket book covers by Bayre Phillips. Bottom, cover art by Earl Moran, photo by Paula Klav. Opposite: Jungle Bettie by William George.

PARIS WILL  
JUST HAVE TO WAIT...  
UNTIL CLIFF AND I  
CAN GO TOGETHER.  
IN THE MEANTIME...

...WE'VE  
GOT A LOT OF  
TALKING TO DO!

ED  
CH

ED  
CH





# DRAGON

184 The Mexican girl who loved and hated him  
by Stanley Nelson and Shirley Wolford



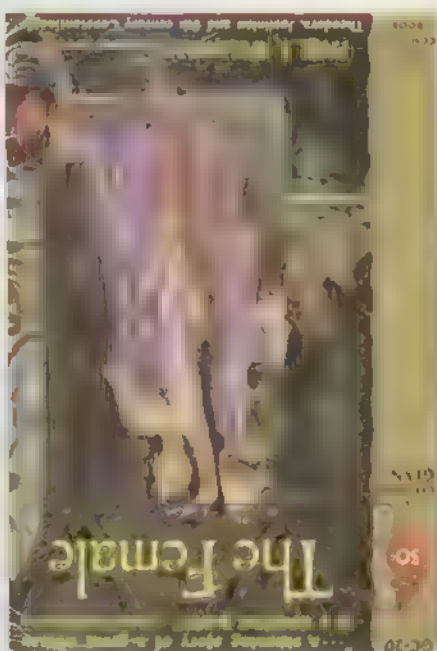
## Savage Cavalier

A lusty novel of the French and Indian War



## A Woman of Samaria

She Betrayed The Man She Loved



Clockwise from top left: Pocketbook cover art by Stanley Nelson and Shirley Wolford; opposite: Cliff Second's Betty by Dave Stevens

On paper, Bettie is a creature of pure imagination. Fabulous. An incarnation of that extraordinary tradition of happy madness, hope. No matter who photographed her in the past or who draws her today — McAnis, Leung, Westman, Hook — she is the past or who draws her today — Bettie, it not only reaffirms life but helps us combat the dark side of our reality.

Those loopy leopard spots are pure non-

makes me jealous.

a jungle girl before he turned twenty, still put her in a comic book but to draw her as seriously, and the wit and talent to not only That Dave had the initiative to take Bettie Bettie. But she was the perfect jungle girl. the hero had to have a girl, and there was asked me to do an adventure strip, well, thought I was crazy. Then, when they back then really would buy it. They in my portfolio," recalls Stevens, "but spotted fur bikini." I carried the art around complete with an itty-bitty, teeny-weeny lured Bettie as a *Captured Jungle Girl*. with Bettie as the heroine. The cover had a look like I was an old hand for a book *Kicker*, he had created a cover for *Betty* Bettie as Cliff Second's girlfriend in *The*

But someone else showed me the way.

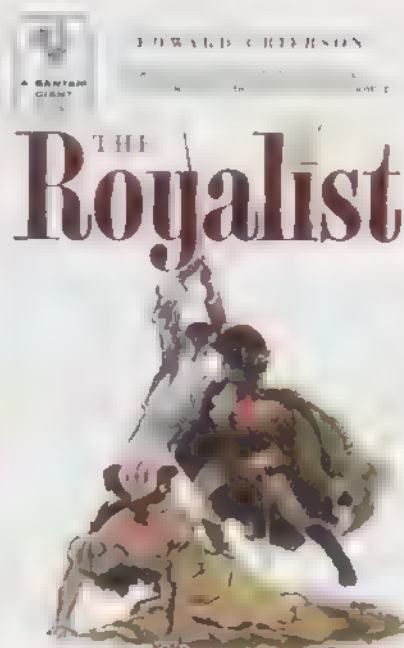
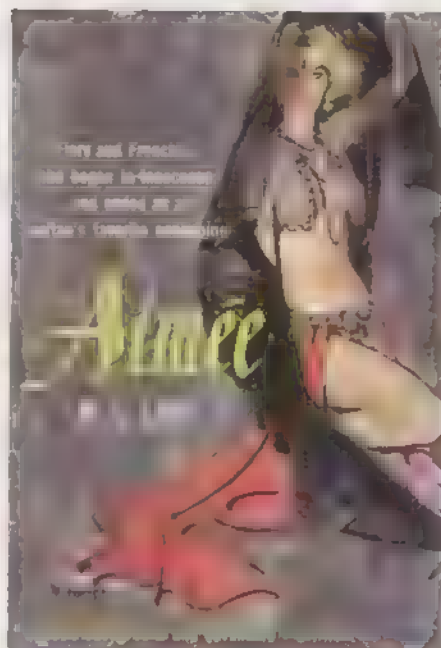
to put in my drawings of Bettie And it was the style and spirit that I wanted a la horus-purus in her performance ing they had to say it was the style that ad hominized to me; it was the some- a reborn. It is that spirit that her photos appeared, and, for me, the spirit of *buffo* only be found in the past. Then Bettie a transfiguration and sublimation, of the es-belles of beauty and laughter, of the for a good story (though while the social, around and physiological have the rest of my adult life, the politics of the at last he's still drawing the m





In the *buffo* tradition is coming back. There is a hunger in the land for its happy madness. It's cropping up in the comic-book stores. You can see it in the work of Greg Darrow, Frank Miller, Dave Gibbons, Moebius, Mike Allred, Milo Manara, Mark Schultz, Dave Stevens, Al Williamson and, of course, its foremost exponent, Bettie Page.

That's the paper Bettie's story, except for the "wow" finish.



Rafael Sabatini  
Captain Blood Returns

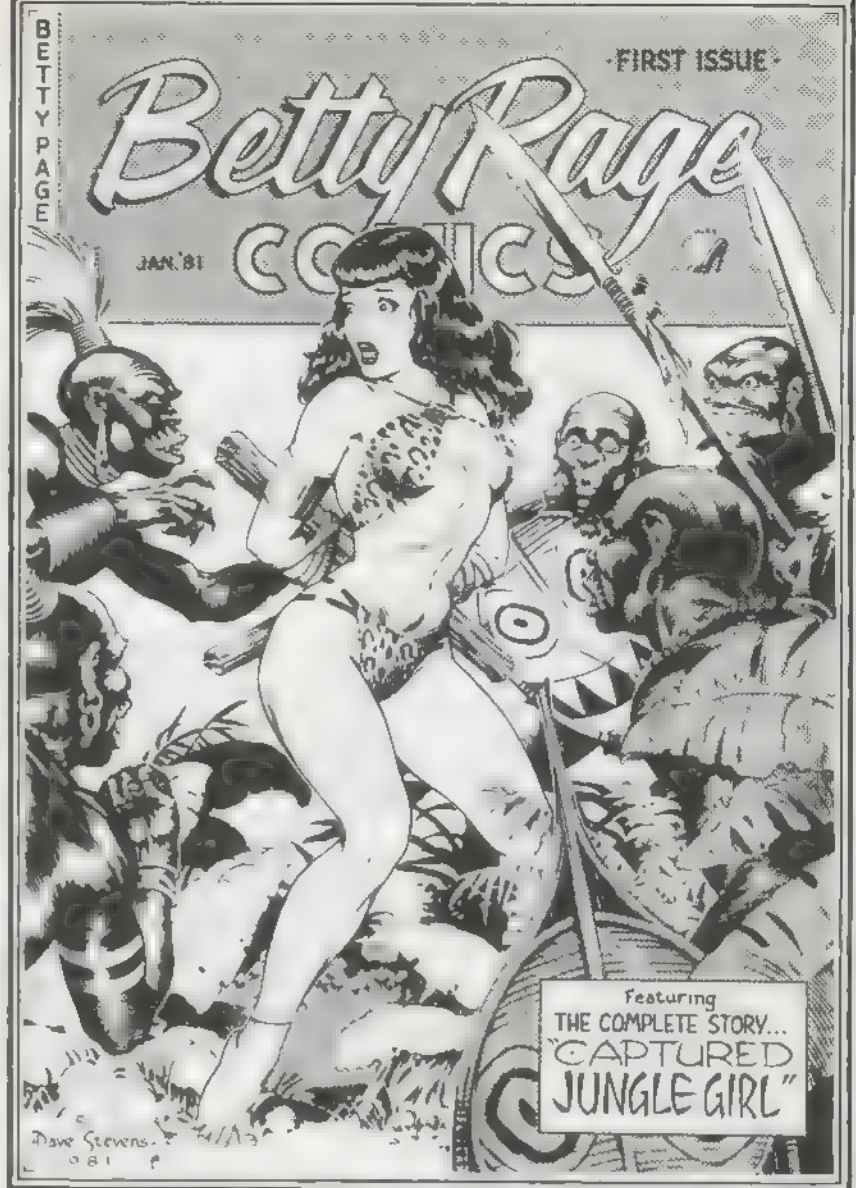


Above: Jungle Bettie.  
Right: Top, pocketbook covers by Mitchell Hooks, Middle, by Robert McGinnis, Bottom, by Robert McGinnis  
Opposite: Bettie on Planet Mango by Al Williamson









Above Left: Jungle Betty.  
 Right: "Captured Jungle Girl" Betty by Dave Stevens.  
 Below: Betty Page in a jungle setting, surrounded by indigenous people.  
 Opposite: "Xenotonic Age" Betty by Mark Schultz.







# BETTIE

*Welcome to Sherwood, m'lady.*  
—Robin Hood from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

Three years ago, I attempted to shape this book so that it could end with one guy, me, saying something to Bettie Page that a whole lot of guys should have said a long time ago — and saying it with style and flair in one sentence: “Thanks, babe.”

That still needs saying, and hopefully the images and words on these pages express, at least to some degree, the depth of my, and our, gratitude. But in the intervening years, as I looked at, drew and wrote about Bettie, the inevitable happened. Bettie took control, and the shape of the book shifted from *how I and my generation belatedly felt about her*, to *the Bettie Page phenomenon*, to *how and why she again took and*

*holds center stage in the theater of our imaginations.*

I’ve tried to do that, hopefully with some success. But no matter how many pictures of her I study, or how many drawings I make, Bettie remains elusive, a whole lot easier to pin up than pin down.

If you want to know more about her, I suggest you get out a pencil and paper, trot over to your local comic-book store, buy some photos of her and start drawing. Her act’s the same as it’s always been: a lot of curves, some nudity, a whole lot of smile. You’ll love it. But what starts as harmless flirtation with Bettie can take you . . . well, you’ve already been warned.

Bettie has power that is neither rational nor explainable. She is a character in tales told by countless imaginations, yet she is real.

She is fact and she is fiction — and she is in fabulous company. Whether you place her with the real legends: Bogie, Marilyn, Dean; with the fictitious ones: Sam Spade, Popeye, the Dragon Lady; or with Tom Mix, Texas Guinan and Gypsy Rose Lee, it does not matter. Like all of them, she is not only an unforgettable image but an individual of such disturbing delight and character that she is a one and only. Bettie Page.

An American original.

























# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## The Artists

Following his career in New York as a paperback cover illustrator, **William George** moved to Los Angeles where he painted record-album covers, portraits and set paintings for the motion-picture studios, and illustrations for package designs. He continued to do covers for the paperback companies, including a notable series for the Louis L'Amour novels published by Bantam Books. In 1975, he turned to fine arts and currently exhibits at the May and Legacy galleries in Scottsdale, Arizona, and the Mountain Trails Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

After setting the standard for historical paperback covers in the fifties and sixties, **Mitchell Hooks** altered his style to fit the demands of the market and now continues to do covers for various pocket-book companies. He resides in New York.

A prolific artist, **Robert Maguire** worked in the paperback field until 1960 when he switched to illustrating greeting cards. He returned to the paperback field in 1969 and continues to paint paperback covers, primarily for romance novels. He also exhibits in the fine arts field, at Gallery Rodeo in Lake Arrowhead, California.

After painting over 1,500 paperback covers — almost all featuring a famous McGinnis Girl — and illustrating stories for most of the major magazines, **Robert McGinnis** was elected to the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in 1993, an honor which placed him in the company of such giants as Howard Pyle, Dean Cornwell, John Gannam, Coby Whitmore, J.C. Leyendecker, Robert Fawcett and John La Gatta. For the last twelve years he has also worked in the fine arts field, and his Western landscapes and figure paintings of women are exclusively available from the Husberg Fine Arts Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona. Three Western landscape prints are also available, from Somerset House in Houston, Texas.

"Come with us to a time-mad future where mankind struggles to survive, vintage Cadillacs race woolly mammoths, and dinosaurs once again rule the earth!"

That's the pitch line for **Mark Schultz's** multi-award-winning, brilliantly drawn and written *Xenozoic Tales* comic-book series. Published volumes are available from Kitchen Sink Press, Northampton, MA, and new issues are due this year.

This book obviously wouldn't exist if **Dave Stevens** hadn't picked up that copy of *Frolic* and started drawing. Since then, he has become one of the stars of the comic-book field. His first series of *The Rocketeer* comics was collected into book form and published by Eclipse Comics. Walt Disney produced a major motion picture from his original story (regrettably, without the Betty character), and a second collection of *The Rocketeer* comics is due from Dark Horse Comics in 1996. Stevens also produces art prints which are sold through Bud Plant Comic Art in Grass Valley, California.

Known for his excellent draftsmanship and portraiture, **Mark Westermoe** is one of the stars of illustration currently working in the Los Angeles area. His primary clients, the film and television studios, keep him constantly busy. Dedicated to classic drawing and the narrative art tradition, Westermoe also teaches drawing and painting at the Associates in Art studios, and his students include some of the best young professionals in the area.

A genuine fifties comic-book artist, **Al Williamson** was a giant then — when he did work for the seminal EC comics — just as he is now. An Errol Flynn, Korngold, Steiner and "all around" fan of the Warner Brothers films, Al is a swashbuckler with pen and ink. Carrying on the tradition and character created by his idol, Alex Raymond, Al drew *Flash Gordon* comic books for King Features in 1966 and 1967, and completed a new *Flash Gordon* series for Marvel Comics in 1995. In between, he did the newspaper strips, "Secret Agent Corrigan" and "Star Wars," has worked for every major and minor comic-book publishing company, and is currently expanding his newspaper strip art and doing covers for Dark Horse's *Classic Star Wars* series.

## The Photographers

In the fifties, **Paula Klaw** took most of the photographs, literally thousands, of Bettie Page which are sold by Movie Star News in New York City. When her brother, Irving Klaw, passed away, Paula took over operation of the company which is still in business today.

The relationship between Bettie and the remarkably talented **Bunny Yeager** has already been covered. Bunny is still working, in Miami Beach, Florida, and is still selling images of Bettie. Simply put, she photographed Bettie Page better than anyone else. As Dave Stevens says, "Thank God for Bunny!"

## The Author

After a career as an art director, magazine editor and publisher, glamour photographer, historian and screenwriter, **Jim Silke** turned, in 1992, to his first love, writing and drawing comics. Three issues of his *Rascals in Paradise* were published by Dark Horse Comics in 1994 and will be published in collection format in November 1995. Upon completion of this book, Silke went to work on a new series of *Rascals in Paradise*.

## Special Thanks

Sometime in 1991, while browsing in a San Francisco bookstore, **Roger May** came across the collection of Bob Collins, photos featured in this book and took them to Bud Plant, who agreed to publish them. Initially, those pictures were the basis for this book, but as time passed, it turned out the photos did not have the exclusive appeal we thought. Consequently, the shape and content of this book changed. Nevertheless, without May's keen eye and efforts to find a publisher for the photos, there would never have been a book.

We also wish to thank the following for their generous contributions and help: Bill Blackbeard of the San Francisco Academy of Comic Art, Eric Kroll of the Stevens/Kroll Collection, Jim Steranko, and Gerber Publishing Company.



# BETTIE *Queen of Hearts* PAGE



Chance. Chaos. Nonsense. Cartoonists, clowns and leopard-skin bikinis . . . Bettie had no artistic genius like Vittorio De Sica or Federico Fellini to help her, not even a Roger Vadim. No Svengali. She designed her own act . . . and whether she posed with a ball and chain or a teddy bear, whether she wore polka dots or a splash of suntan oil, it didn't matter. There was always something being said, some kind of hocus-pocus at work.

Join author/artist Jim Silke as he explores Bettie Page's influence on popular culture, from dime-store novels to paperbacks, and from painting to advertising.



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